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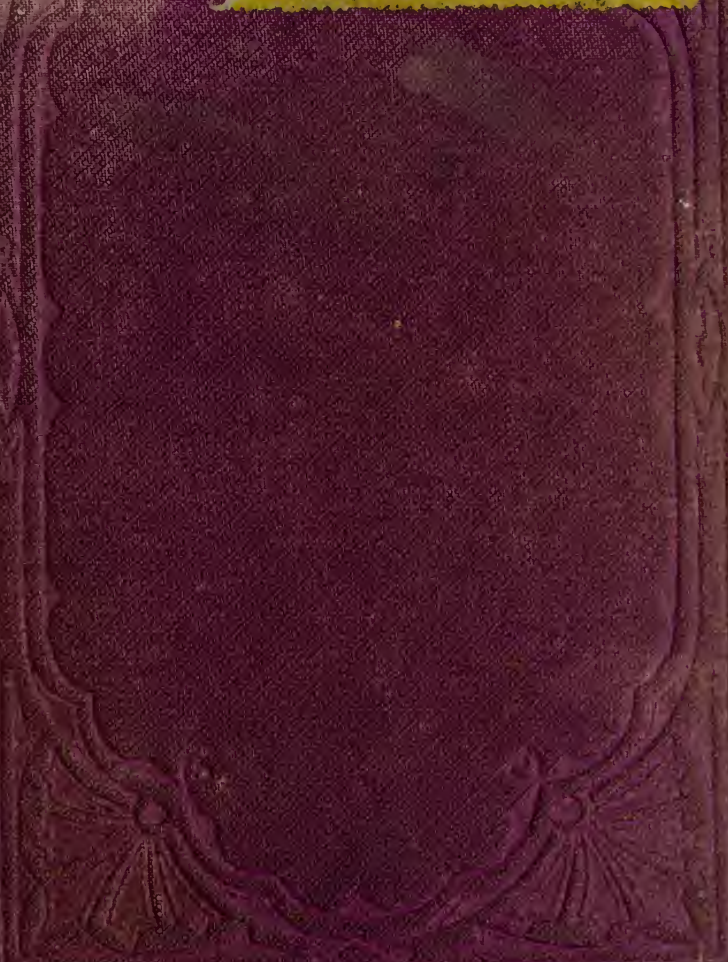
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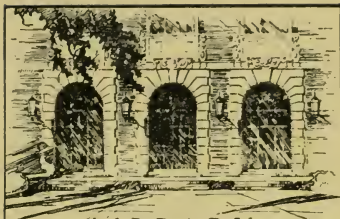
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BENEATH THE WHEELS.



VOL. I.



Thomas Bulwer

BENEATH THE WHEELS.

A Romance.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OLIVE VARCOE," "PATIENCE
CAERHYDON," "SIMPLE AS A DOVE," ETC.

"The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain."

BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

1870.

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THIS WORK

IS

Dedicated

TO

THE DEAR MEMORY OF THOSE I LOVED,

WHO,

BENEATH THE WHEELS

OF

TIME AND SORROW,

LIE SLAIN.

JAN 21 1955

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Don't Buy



BENEATH THE WHEELS.

CHAPTER I.

OW lovely Lady Crehylls looks to-night!" said a languid lady to her partner.

The gentleman raised his eye-glass, and glanced at the beautiful young mistress of Castle Crehylls with a faint interest.

"Yes," said he, "she is perfect ; but hers is the beauty of grace, of elegance, of refinement—the beauty which grows naturally in a soil of wealth and happiness. Take these from her, and her face would lose its look of innocent joy, its childish roundness, its serene trustfulness, if I may so express myself, and I think it would soon grow careworn and prematurely old."

"Mr. Pellew, what strange ideas you have!" cried the lady. "How can you suppose it possible, that Lady Crehylls will ever be touched by trouble—at least not for years to come—till perhaps in old age death may separate her from her husband, or her children?"

"I have strange ideas at times," said Mr. Pellew; "and often, when I look at a face, I see, not its present soft outlines, but the shape it will wear at a harsher time, when sorrow and care have set their marks upon it."

"Sorrow and care, coupled with Lady Crehylls's name, seem to me utterly out of place," returned the lady. "Do you know she is my pet model of happiness?—young, beautiful, and good, adored by her husband, idolized by her father, loved by her friends, and possessing, with all these gifts, the rank, position, and honour which so many court. Where, again, can you find a woman whose surroundings, and qualities combine so many blessings?"

"Nowhere within the circle of my knowledge," replied Mr. Pellew. "Hence I grant her all this, and more, because she has also a most gentle nature. I take nothing from her prosperity or her happiness: I was speaking only of her beauty; I said it would not bear sorrow. I fear you ladies wander very much from the point."

"Sorrow!" cried Mrs. Gilbert, ignoring this last sentence; "and wherefore should she have sorrow? Why, Castle Crehylls in itself is enough to make any moderate woman happy. And think of all she has else! Look at that smiling, glorious boy, who has been handed round to all longing arms this night for kisses and ca-

resses ! And then there is Lord Crehylls—what a fine, handsome fellow he is ! Why, every girl in the county envied Miss Lanyon when she married him. I tell you, Mr. Pellew, you must not put a single shadow in Lady Crehylls's lot, when you speak of her to a woman."

"I will never do it when I speak of her to a man," said Mr. Pellew, smiling, "unless I wish to make a thousand enemies, for she is to most men the ideal and perfection of loveliness."

"And not to you?" asked Mrs. Gilbert.

"No, not to me," he replied.

"Then I should like to see your ideal," said the lady; "for you must be fastidious indeed."

At this moment a young and beautiful girl, seated alone in a recess formed by a bay window, rose abruptly, and crossed the room towards a doorway, where stood a white-haired old gentleman, with a pale and careworn face; and as the girl laid her hand on this gentleman's arm, and he started, and turned towards her with an indescribable, and sudden change in his whole aspect, Mr. Pellew, who had followed her with his eyes, said quietly to his companion, "There stands a lady, whose beauty will bear both time and sorrow. I could not allude to her before, because she sat too near us."

"Miss Sylvester!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert, in a disappointed voice. "Do you think her so very beautiful?"

"Yes, according to my idea of beauty," he replied; "because hers is a face of power, of intellect, of will; and moreover, it is a face capable of intense expression. As a tragic actress she would be superb. Look now at the grace of her figure—it is the perfection of artistic beauty."

"But her face is a little hard," said Mrs. Gilbert.

"It is hard only as an Egyptian statue is hard," said Mr. Pellew—"that is, not given to change; and I acknowledge there is something Egyptian altogether in her aspect; and, like Cleopatra, she will be as beautiful at forty as she is now at eighteen."

"How can you possibly tell that?" asked Mrs. Gilbert, incredulously.

"From the magnificence of her figure, and the passionless calm of her face," was the reply.

"The first indicates a health perfect and lasting; the second betrays an extraordinary power of self-control. She will not tear her face to pieces with passion or with petty cares, as weaker women do. The waves of grief will beat against her health, her symmetry, her beauty, as against a rock; and Time's touch on her will be imperceptible, as on the Sphinx."

Mr. Pellew finished this sentence thoughtfully, and with his eyes fixed on the beautiful figure still standing opposite, set as in a frame by the

Gothic doorway. Either he did not reflect how openly he was betraying his admiration of Miss Sylvester, or else he did not heed who knew it.

"You have certainly studied this young lady with great care," said Mrs. Gilbert, in a bantering tone.

"And without reading her," returned Maurice Pellew, with a certain sadness in his voice. "I have said there is something Egyptian in her aspect; but there is still a darker shadow of Egypt on her soul—that solemn, mysterious, ancient Egypt which is dead and yet alive. This, to my fancy, is the symbol of Miss Sylvester's spirit. She is fateful, sombre, unchangeable, and in some phases harsh and mysterious, as those silent and mighty ruins, which lie upon the Nile."

"Am I speaking to a poet?" said Mrs. Gilbert, with a little of that jealousy, which every woman feels on seeing another woman absorb the thoughts of a clever man."

"At twenty-four," replied Maurice Pellew, "if a man is not a poet, at least at heart, he must be a worthless fellow indeed; and in all my thoughts of woman, I mean to be a poet to my life's end."

Mrs. Gilbert smiled, appeased.

"After saying that you may praise Miss Sylvester as much as you will," she said; "although I confess myself that I don't like her."

"Massive minds have great shadows," returned Maurice; "and evidently you are not fond of shadow. Now, in spite of ruggedness and shade, the sombre and the mighty please me. I detest pettiness of all kinds, even down to petty sins. If a woman wishes to be wicked let her be grandly wicked; then one forgives her."

"Take care," cried Mrs. Gilbert, tapping him with her fan; "you are approaching dangerous ground. Should wickedness and Miss Sylvester be spoken of in the same breath? As a German might say, your words project on my mind the image of a woman, clothed in regal purple, dealing out death and cruelties with an unfaltering hand."

"But deeming it justice," said Maurice Pellew, quickly. Then he paused, and for a moment a deep gloom spread itself over his handsome face.

"Justice!" repeated Mrs. Gilbert. "Tyranny, cruelty, and revenge ever take that name. Kings and priests have slain and burned, always with the cry of justice."

"You have taken the words from my lips," said Maurice, sadly. "I was thinking how possible it was, for a noble mind to be overthrown by a false idea of justice. I was remembering, in the history of the world, how the emblems of human justice have ever been the faggot, the axe, and the halter."

“And thought of all these *àpropos* to Miss Sylvester?” asked Mrs. Gilbert, curiously.

Maurice Pellew laughed faintly, as he replied, “How is it, Mrs. Gilbert, that I always find myself talking confidentially to you? I think you married ladies gain more of a young man’s thoughts in half an hour, than he would tell to his male friends in a month. And to prove this, I will explain why my thoughts were *àpropos* to Miss Sylvester. I am studying for the bar, you know, and Miss Sylvester, being aware of this, often converses with me on jurisprudence. Thus I have discovered that her idea of justice has the grand equity of the heathen poet, or the Jewish lawgiver—‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ Stripe for stripe is her code. In short, Justice is to her a Nemesis who pursues, overtakes, and avenges.”

“I am inclined to think she is right there,” replied Mrs. Gilbert.

“Poetically, even justly speaking, she is so,” said Maurice, uneasily. “But you would not have a woman take pleasure in that kind of justice?”

“You mean you would look for the softer qualities of mercy, and pity in a woman’s heart,” said Mrs. Gilbert. “Well, if you have not found these in your ideal, I am really sorry for your misplaced admiration. Now I observe her again, I perceive she has not an amiable expression.”

For a moment Mr. Pellew coloured, then he laughed.

"You mean," said he, "that Miss Sylvester has not the usual simpering young lady look, and she is not very ready with her smiles. Fancy an Egyptian statue smiling!"

"Ah, I see nothing will chill your admiration," said the lady. "By the bye, who is Miss Sylvester? I have never seen her at Crehylls before."

"She is the adopted daughter of Mr. Lanyon," returned Maurice. "She resides with him at his seat, Penkivel. She does not come often to Crehylls. I fancy she dislikes the place," he added, thoughtfully.

"An adopted daughter!" repeated Mrs. Gilbert. "The expression is delightfully vague; it really tells one nothing."

"I believe she is, in fact, a distant relative of the Lanyons," continued Mr. Pellew, a little coldly. "At all events, Mr. Lanyon is her guardian, and she has been under his care since her early childhood."

"Oh, then you know all about her," responded Mrs. Gilbert. "Now I can't imagine myself how she can be a relative; for, as an old Cornish family, the Lanyon pedigree is pretty well known in all its branches; and it is hard to fix upon Miss Sylvester's place on the family tree."

"Perhaps she has no place on it, Mrs. Gilbert,"

said Mr. Pellew. "She may be only the orphan daughter of a friend."

"Oh, I thought you knew," observed the lady, carelessly.

Her tone provoked Maurice Pellew; and long as he had known Mrs. Gilbert, and old friend as he counted her, he yet felt inclined to resent it.

"I have never inquired very particularly into Miss Sylvester's pedigree," he observed, coldly; "but to oblige you, Mrs. Gilbert, I will certainly get well posted up in the matter of her genealogy, by the next time we meet. There is not the slightest mystery, I can assure you, in Mr. Lanyon's way of speaking of his ward."

Mrs. Gilbert coloured slightly, then laid her hand kindly on the young man's arm.

"Old friendship has its privileges," she said, "and I use mine to tell you that I hate mysteries. If I was mistaken, and there is none, I am glad. I suppose people know so little of this young lady, because she was educated abroad."

"She has only been abroad during the last three years, by her own wish, to study music," returned Maurice. "Have you heard her sing?"

"No," answered Mrs. Gilbert; "and I am not fond of Italian music."

Evidently she was determined not to sympathize in any way, with his admiration for Miss Sylvester, and the young man continued the conversation in a tone of deeper pique.

"With Miss Sylvester's voice and genius, all music is beautiful," said he, "no matter of what country. And you are in error to suppose she has had a foreign education. She was brought up by a lady who resided near London, and Mr. Lanyon, as I well know, travelled thither every year to see her."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Gilbert, in a voice from which she studiously extracted every expression of interest. "Don't you think Mr. Lanyon is looking very ill to-night?"

This last question was spoken kindly, and with a marked difference of accent. Her young friend bit his lip but made no reply.

"He ages fast," resumed the lady, "and yet, you know, he is not an old man."

"I suppose he is sixty," said Maurice. "I never saw so worn a face. I was thinking of him, when I said Lady Crehylls's beauty would not bear grief. You acknowledge she is very like her father?"

"A mere family likeness," replied Mrs. Gilbert, unwillingly. "I can never fancy her fair face worn into lines like his. And why he should look so careworn is a mystery; for excepting the loss of his wife, sorrow has never touched him,—his whole life has been full of ease, comfort, and honour."

"Perfectly true," said Maurice; "yet you see the mere wear and tear of life has racked his face terribly."

“By Jove, you are right, young sir !” observed a jolly old gentleman, who had hobbled into the recess near them a moment or two before; “but it is entirely Lanyon’s own fault. He has made himself an old man by his sedentary habits. Why has he given up hunting? Why did he resign his commission as justice of the peace? There wasn’t a more active magistrate on the bench, sir, than he was. I remember the time when he was the hardest fellow amongst us against poachers and smugglers, and all sorts of scamps. Now that rascal Polgrain—and there isn’t a greater smuggler going—may run a cargo under his very window, and he never says a word. Bless me, how he is changed! Why, my dear Mrs. Gilbert, you must surely recollect that singular and dreadful murder, which he hunted out, and sifted to the bottom with such skill and celerity, that the guilty man was taken, tried, and condemned in about three weeks.”

“I recollect very little about it,” replied Mrs. Gilbert, who still thought herself a belle; “I was such a mere child at the time.”

“Ah,” continued the old gentleman, gazing into her countenance with a look which took in her age to a month or two, “I should have thought you would have remembered it pretty well; the affair made such a fuss at the time.”

“What were the circumstances?” asked Maurice. “I never heard them.”

“I daresay not,” replied the gentleman. “You must have been a boy; and perhaps the Cornish news scarcely travelled as far as your place. Well, it was a singular murder, and Mr. Lanyon was very active in searching it out. It happened just before the sessions, and some thought the trial could not come off then for want of sufficient evidence; but through Mr. Lanyon’s zeal and ability, the prisoner’s guilt was proved, and Mr. Lanyon was thanked by the Bench for the great pains he had taken to sift out the truth. Yet (will you believe it?) from that time he takes a disgust to his duties, and never acts as a magistrate again. We missed him, I assure you; for in those days some amongst us were hardly as wise as their wigs.”

The old gentleman laughed, and hobbled away again; but Maurice Pellew, who hardly cared to talk longer to Mrs. Gilbert, if she would not listen to his praise of Miss Sylvester, followed him, and took a seat by his side.

“Excuse me, Mr. Pydar,” he said; “I am a stranger in this crowd, and therefore feel as though I had a right to bore the few people I know. This is my first visit to Castle Crehylls. What a noble pile it is!”

“Ah, it is worth looking at,” replied the old justice. “Little boy Crehylls is born with a golden spoon in his mouth, isn’t he? He’ll have this place and Penkivel too. That is what

puts all the women into ecstasies. Bless you ! it dazzles 'em when they see a child whose cap might be a coronet, and who has parks and castles tacked on to his short frocks."

"True," observed Maurice Pellew, smiling ; "but I think there is a little sentiment also in their admiration of this lucky youngster. Lord and Lady Crehylls are a very handsome and attached couple, and so popular in their county that every heart is touched by their joy."

"Well, yes, one likes these old families to have a direct heir," remarked Mr. Pydar ; "and the brother, young Mr. Crehylls, would be but a poor representative of his race. Do you know him?"

"Only slightly," replied Maurice ; "but Lord and Lady Crehylls I have met often at Penkivel, where I have visited for some years."

"Then you knew her when she was Miss Lanyon, I suppose?" said Mr. Pydar.

"Yes," replied Maurice ; "but I was acquainted with her father long before I had the pleasure of being introduced to his daughter. He used to come up to London every year to see his ward, Miss Sylvester, and she, being at the same school with my sisters, was often invited by them to our town house. He called one day to thank us for this, and that is how my acquaintance with Mr. Lanyon began."

"So you have known Miss Sylvester from a child!" exclaimed Mr. Pydar, with some

curiosity. "The old gentleman is mighty close about that ward of his. Hadn't she a father or mother, or any one belonging to her then?"

"She was quite alone, as she is now," replied Maurice. "She had but her guardian, Mr. Lanyon."

"And who was her father?" asked the old justice, in a confidential whisper.

"An Indian officer, I believe," returned the young man, drawing slightly back from his questioner. "But to let you into a secret, no one ever mentions him to his daughter, because the manner of his death was so distressing. He failed in some dangerous expedition on which he was sent, and he took this so much to heart, that he shot himself. Mind, I never heard this from Mr. Lanyon, so I cannot vouch for its truth. I had it from my sisters, who learned it from the lady at whose school Miss Sylvester was educated."

"Ah, that accounts for the little air of mystery there is around the young lady," said Justice Pydar, in a satisfied tone. "Poor girl! I am sorry for her; that may do her some harm now in her chance of matrimony. Many men would object to the daughter of a man, who died by his own hand. You see it might be insanity."

"Or it might be only distress of mind," said Maurice, who had raked up this old story of Miss Sylvester's school-days, out of sheer vexation

at the tone in which, for the second time this evening, her name had been mentioned to him. He knew the old justice would repeat it, but he thought that even a gloomy report of this kind would be better for the girl, than the vague shadow now lying over her.

"You were speaking just now," he continued, "of Mr. Lanyon's retirement from all public duties, and his lonely life at Penkivel. May not the sad death of his friend have had something to do with this?"

"It may, sir," replied the old justice, in whose brain a new idea was slow to take root; "but I always set it down to—to that affair of the murder."

"How could that possibly affect Mr. Lanyon?" asked Maurice, in surprise.

Old Mr. Pydar gazed up at the magnificent ceiling of the library, then out at the wide doors to the reception-room beyond, where the dazzling company flitted to and fro, and finally he brought his eyes upon his own gouty foot.

"Upon my word I don't know that I can tell you the story here," he said; "it seems scarcely fair to rake up the past beneath a man's own roof."

"Do you mean to say," asked Maurice, with increased astonishment, "that Lord Crehylls——"

"Hush!" interrupted the old gentleman, anxiously. "I don't of course mean to say that

Lord Crehylls was in any way accountable for the guilt of the wretched man, who perished justly for his crime, but it is certain that he committed it in a frenzy of jealousy, and the common talk was, that it was a mercy Lord Crehylls had escaped the same fate, for he was as jealous of him as of the man he slew."

Maurice Pellew bent forward eagerly to ask for fuller details of a story, which interested him more than the old justice could imagine; but Lady Crehylls at that moment disengaged herself from a group standing beyond the doorway, and came towards him.

"Mr. Pellew," she said, "I have been looking for you everywhere, and at last Madeline told me you were here. Do you mean to desert the ball-room entirely?"

"Not if Lady Crehylls will favour me with a dance," returned the young man, rising and offering her his arm.

"I am afraid that I have promised more dances already, than I shall be able to accomplish," she replied; "but I will carry you off a captive notwithstanding. Mr. Pydar, I call you to account for keeping a good dancer so long inactive."

"Upon my word, it is not my fault," said the old gentleman. "Young men now-a-days are not what they were in my time." He kissed his hand gallantly in response to Lady Crehylls's smile,

saying to himself, as she and Maurice departed, "Well, she certainly is the loveliest woman I ever saw, except Mrs. Sherborne—yes, excepting her always. I am glad she carried off that young fellow: I really didn't want to rake up that old story again."

CHAPTER II.

T was the morning after the grand ball at Castle Crehylls. All in the house slept late except Madeline Sylvester; and she, with silent, but firm step, came down the great staircase ere yet a servant had stirred. Undoing the bolt of a glass door leading into a conservatory, she walked through it amongst the flowers without casting a glance upon their loveliness, and thence she stepped out upon the lawn. Here she turned suddenly, and with folded arms stood looking upon the stately pile, which rose before her grand and massive, and glowing in the morning sun. It was with no painter's eye she scanned the noble building, it was scarcely even with a womanly glance that her eyes, in deep and earnest gaze, fixed themselves on the silent and sleeping mansion. As she turned away at last, a long-drawn sigh fell from her lips.

“A noble place,” she said, half audibly—
“worthy of a noble line. If honour and truth had no other refuge upon earth, surely they would find their home beneath a roof like this.

How easy for the noble, the wealthy, the honoured to keep free from crime! Easy, do I say? Ah, rather let me cry, how impossible it is, that the temptations which seize the outcast, should ever touch their careless tranquillity with a guilty shadow! But human justice never heeds this difference; it punishes the sin, and counts not the strength of the temptation. Now, if a man in ease of life, dreaming away his days in the silken rest of rank and riches, were suddenly to lift his hand against another, the blind law would reckon his guilt no greater than that of the poor shivering wretch, whom gaunt famine and hard despair had driven into crime. The sentence, perhaps, in either case would be the same. That is injustice—rank injustice! But the suffering”—here the girl stopped, and turned her eyes again upon the glistening castle—“ah, the suffering—supposing the owner of such a pile as that could be guilty of a poor man’s sins—would, I grant, be ten times greater—as much greater as the guilt would be. And so nature would mend the law, and make the sentence equal.”

She walked on quickly after saying this, with her eyes upon the ground, and a certain trembling on her lip, which in a weaker woman might soon have turned to tears; but she shook the weakness off with a slight shiver only, as she drew her cloak around her, saying firmly as she went on, “I do not complain—I have no right

to murmur. It is just that I should suffer. Every man knows that his deeds live after him in the happiness or the misery of his children ; and this knowledge did not hold back my father's hand. Well, then, 'tis he has shaped my life, and put this horror in my blood ; and I must bear it as I can. I must walk beneath the cloud and the shadow of his guilt all my life long. He had no mercy on me ; no thought of his innocent child stayed his reckless hand. Then why should the world pity me ? Pity ! ah no, I will never ask it for pity."

Faster still she hurried on now, never lifting her eyes from off the ground to note the flushed and rosy sky, never heeding the long dewy lights upon the grass, which quivering met her feet, as she passed on sombrely beneath the shadow of stately trees. Thus she crossed the park, regardless of all its beauty, only staying once when a browsing herd of deer, startled by her presence, dashed by with a sudden rush, turning their brown eyes meekly on her as they passed.

"Poor frightened things," she said, "they little know how much happier they are than the miserable, helpless creature whom they fear !"

She leant against a chestnut tree as they went by, and she stood here a minute listlessly, with the shadows of the broad leaves falling darkly on her beautiful pale face. These, or the gloom of her own thoughts, made her shiver, and stepping

out from the shade of the great tree, she walked on in a blaze of sunshine, with a lark high above her head singing a sweet shrill song, which fell down upon her ears in dewy music, fresh and clear as the morning light. Up, up into the bright blue soared the tiny bird, bearing with him a long stream of melody rippling with a thousand notes of joy, which stirred the air with expectant gladness as they quivered downwards from the azure sky. And beneath the music, and in the sunshine, proud, bitter and joyless, Madeline Sylvester walked onwards to one terrible spot, which she had heard of but not seen, and which her resolute soul had determined her eyes should behold for themselves, and not through the report of another.

* * * *

In the great wood of Crehylls, almost three miles from the Castle, there ran brawling a narrow and shallow stream, strewn with rocks; its banks were high and irregular, parts being wooded to the very edge, while, in other places, its precipitous sides were bare and rugged, standing up like miniature cliffs, clothed only with scanty hazel bushes, or here and there a gay tuft of heath. But at one spot, where a sudden bend brought the stream into a wider channel, there was a singular rent in the rocks or wall hemming it in; the cliffs here seemed split in twain, clearing a path, as it were, for the wayfarer to a ford,

across which ran a succession of flattened rocks like stepping-stones. On the opposite side, a similar opening in the rocks led the wanderer up a rugged path, into the footway, which wound through the wood, towards the sea, whose waves, to a listening ear, joined like a distant murmur with the sighing of leaf and branch.

In all the wood there was scarcely a more secluded, or more beautiful spot than this little ford; and yet, as Madeline approached it through the steep and lonely path, her heart beat violently, and her whole frame trembled. She was on the left bank, but the current drifted towards the right, and there was always a perceptible difference between the two shores; notably so here at the ford, where the path descended on the left through a dense wood, while on the opposite side lay a kind of reach bordered by a sloping bank of soft turf. On this there was cut neatly a long cross, which, leaving exposed the white rock beneath, glistened painfully on the eye as the sun struck it.

Seeing this glittering through the leaves, as she drew near, Madeline stopped suddenly, and covered her face with her hands. She did not weep or cry, yet her whole aspect was one of drear and dreadful grief, and when at last her hands drooped down by her side in an attitude of despair, her face and lips were colourless. Still, between the leafy screen, the cross gleamed

and glared upon her eyesight, while the rippling sound of the little waves upon the beach, and the rustle of innumerable leaves, alone broke the stillness, save when some huge roller rushed with mighty roar upon the distant cliff, and mingled its hoarse murmur with these softer sounds. This lone cry of the ocean, terrible in its suggestiveness of strength and woe, seemed to Madeline like the wail of her own soul, as, pent up in silence, it swelled beneath its storm of grief. And thus the great, drear roar of the sullen sea soothed her; and with that strange, immovable calm, which Maurice Pellew had called Egyptian, set again upon her face like a steadfast mask, she walked firmly on to the edge of the shining water; but ere her foot had touched the first stepping-stone, a voice accosted her, and, looking up, she saw Maurice Pellew.

"It needed but this," murmured Madeline to herself, bitterly, "that I should find him here. Well, I can bear this too, and yet live."

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure," cried Maurice, as, descending the bank hastily, he ran forward, and held out his hand to assist Madeline in crossing the brook; but, not heeding his proffered aid, she stepped lightly over the rocks, and stood in a moment by his side. Then she gave him her hand, greeting him with a calm and grave courtesy more befitting a matron than a girl. Yet her heart stood still as

the clasp of his warm fingers thrilled her veins, and she resisted with iron force a passionate desire to cry aloud in his ears all her anguish and pain.

"You startled me a little, Mr. Pellew," she said, quietly. "I thought I was the only one at the Castle, whom the bright morning had tempted out so early."

"To tell the truth, I have not slept at all," said Maurice. "As I watched the carriages drive away, I saw the sun rise gloriously, and felt far more inclined for a stroll than for slumber. So I came on here."

"And why here?" asked Madeline, lifting her eyes slowly from the ground, and fixing them on his face.

"I ask the same question," said Maurice, laughing. "Why has Miss Sylvester chosen this solitary walk?"

A strange look sprang into Madeline's grey eyes, and a rush of colour mounted to her brow, leaving her like marble as it faded.

"I suppose it was chance brought me here," she replied, coldly, turning from him.

The young man misinterpreted instantly her emotion, and her displeasure.

"Surely, Miss Sylvester," he cried, eagerly, "you cannot think I am such a coxcomb as to imagine——"

"That I followed your steps, knowing you to be here?" interrupted Madeline, with the utmost composure. "No, indeed, Mr. Pellew ;

I do more justice to your understanding than to look on you in the light of a coxcomb. Good-bye, —I am going on to the sea."

"Then you will let me walk with you?" he exclaimed. "I was thinking of going to the cliffs myself. After a night of dancing, and dance music, a sight of the sea will be more calming than sleep."

Madeline looked wistfully down the brook, and over the soft green bank, with a slight shudder creeping over her frame.

"Yes," she said, dreamily, "the might and immensity of the sea soothe a vexed spirit strangely. Before such overpowering strength it is so useless to chafe; it is only weakness, Mr. Pellew, that frets at fate."

"But your fate is so bright, Miss Sylvester," said Maurice, "that I wonder at your gloomy thoughts this morning."

"This is such a wild, gloomy place," she replied—"it depresses me."

"Yes, it is strangely lonely and sad," he said; "and doubtless it is the scene of some wild and dreadful deed, or it would not be marked with this cross. What terrible legend does it commemorate?—can you tell me, Miss Sylvester?"

"Can I tell you?—I?" she reiterated, wildly, and her face grew grey and haggard as if with sudden pain. Then her manner changed abruptly, and laying her hand lightly on the bark of the

stout oak, beneath whose shade she stood, she laughed musically, saying, "Ask this ancient tree, Mr. Pellew—doubtless he saw the deed done—whether it was good or evil; but as for me, I am not rooted in this soil—I am a stranger here; and if there be some black and evil tale connected with this spot, you cannot hear it from my lips."

The grey shadow was on her face again as she finished, and Maurice Pellew, gazing at her curiously, wondered, with a pang of jealousy, whether her strange mood was caused by love for some unknown rival, whom he had never seen.

"I am a stranger, too, you know," said Maurice; "and since we have explored this place together, I will give you the benefit of its history when I hear it. I dare say Lord Crehylls can tell it me."

"I have no doubt he can," said Madeline, stooping to gather a tuft of moss. But scarcely had she lifted it in her white fingers, ere, with an indescribable action of loathing, she flung it away. "Ah," she cried, hurriedly, "how could I touch it!"

Evidently she had but culled the moss to hide her face from Maurice Pellew, while at the same instant some sudden horror made her cast it down.

"What is the matter?" he asked, coming towards her in alarm.

"Nothing," she answered, meeting his gaze

with sad eyes ; “only I have a fancy this is unholy ground, and I am sorry my hand has touched it. See, I have stained it with this red earth !” she added, looking down upon the tiny spot left by the root of moss, with a gradual paleness growing over her cheeks.

“Are you so superstitious ?” asked Maurice, laughing. “Wash your hand, then, in the stream ; the water is beautifully clear and pure.”

“No, it is stained with blood,” said Madeline, gloomily.

Wiping her hand with her handkerchief, she dropped it in the brook, and watched it float away, while Maurice regarded her with some curiosity.

“How well you said those tragic words !” he cried. “For a moment I felt as if they were really true. Shall I plunge into the stream for your handkerchief ?—or did you drop it wilfully ?”

“Let us go on to the sea,” said Madeline, without answering his question. “I long to get out of this gloomy wood.”

Following the footpath, and walking briskly, they soon emerged upon an open down, where the sea-breeze met them freshly.

Just at the edge of the wood stood a small thatched cottage ; beyond it, and at a considerable distance, lay a pile of loose granite, or moor stones, as they are commonly called. Madeline’s

gaze fell on those objects in a curious, wistful way.

"An old shaft lies up there among those granite rocks," she said. "Do you think, Mr. Pellew, that a thatcher at work on that cottage roof could see it distinctly?"

"What a curious question!" said Maurice. "Firstly, how do you know there is a shaft there?"

Madeline looked at him with a quick, uneasy glance; then her eyes fell, and her lips quivered.

"I have heard Mr. Lanyon speak of it," she replied. "The granite is piled round the shaft as a guard; else it would be easy enough to step into it."

"In that case," returned Maurice, "I have no doubt the place is perfectly visible from the roof of the cottage; but I don't perceive why you are curious on the subject. If you wish to see the shaft, we can go up to the rocks and look down its black depths."

"No, thank you," said Madeline, abruptly.

Walking on hurriedly, she kept strangely silent, till, on mounting a long slope, a glorious view of the sea burst upon them suddenly; then, with an exclamation of delight, she stood still gazing on the scene, while a flush of unwonted joy lit up her face with a radiant beauty.

With his eyes fixed on her with a mournful and reluctant admiration, Maurice felt sorrow-

fully, that Madeline was the sole woman in the world for whose love he could ever care, and without her his life would be empty, dreary, and hard.

"How absorbed and happy you look!" he ventured to say, softly.

Recalled to herself by his words, Madeline started, and the flush of joy died away from her face.

"Oh yes, for a moment I had forgotten myself," she said, wearily. "I do not wonder that the sick and sorrowful, come to the sea to lay down their burden for a while."

"But you," returned Maurice, "so young, so beautiful, what have you to do with sickness and sorrow?"

"I am an orphan," she answered; "and care, and trouble, and the world's cruelty, fall heavily on the friendless."

"But Mr. Lanyon is better to you than a father; and there are others," said Maurice, eagerly, "who yearn to give you a life-long devotion."

As he spoke, a long, low roll of thunder echoed from cliff to cliff, heavy drops of rain fell, and the sea grew black with many shadows. All these were the warnings of a fast-coming storm—one of those Summer storms, which the Atlantic flings at times on the coast of Cornwall with a suddenness, and strength only equalled by the swiftness, with which they pass away.

“What shall we do?” cried Madeline. “Is there any shelter near?”

Maurice saw, with some embarrassment, that she took advantage of the storm to evade replying to his somewhat hasty and warm speech; and, half glad to escape for a moment, he said,—“If you will stay here an instant, I will run down the hill, and see if there is any shelter, nearer than the cottage we have passed.”

As he went, Madeline’s eyes followed him with a look of wistful and passionate tenderness; yet in a moment she turned proudly away, as though chiding herself for her own weakness. Then, as the rain fell heavily, she descended the slope, and took shelter against one of the huge moor stones with which the heath was scattered. Here in a few minutes Maurice joined her.

“There is a house down here!” he cried, joyfully. “It stands just at the end of the gorge, through which the stream finds its way to the sea. If you do not mind crossing the wood through the wet, and getting down a very steep descent, we shall reach it quickly.”

The storm was raging now with so much violence, that Madeline could scarcely stand against it, as, bending her head to the wind, she hurried on with Maurice through the blinding rain.

The scene they traversed was wonderfully wild and beautiful. To the left lay the great

Atlantic, tossing darkly beneath the tempest, while all around them was spread a wide, bare moor, dotted with huge masses of granite, looming out with ghostly whiteness through the driving mists and shadows. Far below their hurrying feet, stretched the deep leafy ravine, with its troubled river flowing turbidly to the sea, and its soft and varied tints of green forming a wondrous contrast with the gloomy sea, and the rugged moor. For though on the topmost height of the gorge, the trees had given place to heath and furze, the lower steeps remained green and wooded, almost to the edge of the sands. Mid-way on the descent, there jutted out above the stream a natural platform of rock, placed just where the narrow glen opened to the ocean; and on this, commanding a wild view over sea and land, there stood a low irregularly-built house surrounded by a balcony. The wood pressed closely round it, except on one side, where lay a neglected garden covered with mingled weeds and flowers.

Thus hidden by rock and foliage, the house bore a romantic and picturesque aspect, greatly heightened by the wonderful beauty of its situation. Yet its extreme loneliness, and the rank luxuriance of trees, ferns, and trailing plants, which clustered all around, gave the place a dreary and melancholy look, which saddened the beholder with thoughts of solitude and decay.

To the door of this dwelling Maurice led his companion, guiding her down the rocky road, and through the weed-cumbered garden with a careful hand.

"I fear the place is uninhabited," he said, as the echo of the bell he had pulled rang drearily through the empty rooms. "Will you stay here in the porch, Miss Sylvester?" he continued; "and I will go round to the other side, and endeavour to enter by a window, and then I will unbar the door for you."

He disappeared as he spoke; but scarcely was he gone, ere Madeline heard the bolt withdrawn, and the dilapidated door, grating unwillingly on its hinges, opened slowly, and she saw before her a tall, dark, haggard man, with the grey colourless face of a corpse.

If the strange and ghastly look of this man somewhat startled Madeline, his wild exclamation of terror on seeing her alarmed her still more.

"Heaven help me!" he cried, as he leaned trembling against the wall. "The hour I have dreaded for twelve years is come."

Madeline drew back as he spoke, deeming him a man disordered in his wits, and perhaps dangerous; but seeing her alarm, he came forward quietly, with a wistful smile on his pale lips.

"I am not mad," he said. "Such as I am now, blind to the sunshine, and stricken in heart,

I have been for many years; but my mind is clear and sound. Come in: who has so great a right as you to the doleful shelter of St. Eglon's Hut?"

As he uttered this, a sharp cry escaped from Madeline's lips, and her face grew white as his own.

"Is this St. Eglon's Hut?" she said; and starting from the shelter of the porch, she stood out in the pelting storm, looking up at the dismantled windows, the wild untrained plants that fell about them, and the weather-stained, broken balcony, weed-covered, from which the rain dripped down. This drear and desolate dwelling seemed to find a mirror in her face, whereon to picture all its woe: for as she looked, her cheeks grew ashen grey, and the heaviness of death weighed on her clouded eyes.

"Miss Sylvester!" cried Maurice Pellew's voice, rousing her as from some terrible vision; "why do you stand there? Come in, I entreat you. Do you not see the man has opened the door?"

He hurried her forward, eager to shelter her from the storm, but she went like one impelled by force, and in crossing the threshold, her strength failed her utterly, and she would have fallen but for Mr. Pellew's arm, which was instantly flung around her, holding her up in safety.

"You are tired to death," he exclaimed

anxiously ; “ and I fear you are very wet. Can we have a fire here ? ” he said to the tall, silent man, who stood regarding them.

“ There is a fire in the kitchen, if the lady does not mind sitting there,” he replied.

This proposition seemed to be a relief to Madeline, who had drawn back from the damp and dreary parlour with a shudder.

“ I do not mind at all,” she said, quietly. “ That is, if we are not disturbing you.”

“ There is no fear of that,” said the man ; “ your presence will disturb no one—the house is empty. It has never been inhabited since——”

But here, as he put a chair for Madeline by the bright wood fire, he paused suddenly, and his eye fell before the searching glance she fixed on his face.

“ And whose property is it ? ” asked Mr. Pellew.

“ It belongs to Lord Crehylls, sir,” replied the man. “ My sister has charge of it, and lights a fire here once a week ; but, as it happened to-day, by chance—and yet no, nothing happens by chance—I did that work for her this morning.”

As he spoke, he glanced uneasily at Madeline and moved a little way beyond her, where she could not see him without turning her head. She, however, continued to dry her wet mantle, listening, but not joining in the dialogue, or appearing to care much for what they said.

"Then I suppose Lord Crehylls finds it difficult to get a tenant for such a lonely house?" said Maurice.

"I don't think he has ever tried to let it, sir," returned the man, "since—since the last tenants left."

"And how long ago was that?" asked Mr. Pellew.

"I don't know," replied the man, abruptly; and leaning forward, he flung a new log upon the fire. As he did this, Madeline's eyes met his, and a glance was exchanged between them, which, on her side, certainly thanked him for his silence, while, on his part, the look expressed something so strange—some feeling so full of an inexplicable remorse and pity,—that her heart beat fast with a vague fear and wonder.

"Upon my word," continued Maurice, "I am surprised Lord Crehylls keeps up the place in this way, if he does not mean to let it. He should at least sell the furniture. Don't you think so, Miss Sylvester?"

"Perhaps he comes here himself sometimes in the summer," said Madeline.

She seemed to speak unwillingly, and there was a curious repressed excitement in her manner, which made the tones of her voice tremble. It was not Maurice who answered her.

"Lord Crehylls never comes here," said the pale man. "I believe his father built this place

for a pleasure-house ; but to me it is a ghastly place, with no pleasure in it."

"I think you are quite right," observed Maurice, laughing. "I was never in a more doleful dwelling in my life. And yet the situation is most beautiful."

"You wouldn't say so in the winter, sir," returned the other. "The wind howls round this headland terribly ; and on stormy nights the sea-spray dashes against the windows, and the house rocks like a cradle. 'Tis a lonesome place then, sir."

"Well, yes, I expect so," said Maurice ; "like all romantic places, it has doubtless its dark side."

"Its dark side !" repeated the man, in a voice of inexpressible pathos. "Ah, it has brought darkness to more than one."

Madeline turned her head hurriedly, and as the strange calm and power of her beautiful face flashed full on the man, he stopped, and a grey shadow crept up to his very brow. Maurice had walked to the window, and stood looking out upon the sea.

"Does the tide ever run up this creek ?" he asked, carelessly.

Mr. Pellew did not move his eyes from the prospect without in speaking, and observing this, the man bent suddenly, and with his lips close to Madeline's ear, he whispered, "When and

where can I see you again, miss? I have a message for you from your father."

This was said so hurriedly, that, but for the terrible paleness which overspread Madeline's face, he would not have been sure that she had heard him. The next moment he turned towards Maurice, and replied to his question.

"The tide runs up but a little way, sir. except when there is a very heavy sea; then I have known the salt water reach the ford."

"The ford?" repeated Maurice. "Ah, that is where the cross is cut on the bank. Can you tell me what it commemorates?"

"I believe a man was found there dead," replied the other in a hesitating way.

The strange paleness of the man's face grew ghastlier as he spoke, and he looked at Madeline as though demanding permission to say more. She had risen, and stood confronting him, her whole attitude full of suspicion and defiance.

"Found dead!" echoed Maurice. "Do you mean he was found drowned?"

"Spare us the details," said Madeline. "I hate dismal stories."

Her words sounded to the man like a command, and by a motion of his eyelids he conveyed to her an intimation that she should be obeyed. The fear and anguish shining on her face were reflected doubly upon his, mingled with a deep pity for her, which Madeline felt, although

no word of his expressed it. Full of anger at this pity, and full of wonder and fear at his mention of her father, she stood proudly silent, apparently resolved to make no reply to his singular request. Seeing nothing of this strange by-play, Maurice remained at the window, crying out, suddenly, "Ah, here is the sun at last! Now, what do you say, will it clear up?"

"It is useless to ask me," said the man, with a wistful smile. "I never see the sun. The brightest day is as grey and dull to me, as a November evening."

"Are you blind then?" inquired Madeline, with a softer look upon her face.

"No, madam," he replied; "but all things seem grey and dead to me. I have not seen the sun these many years."

He spoke in a low, hopeless tone, and there was over all his aspect such a dull, leaden, shadowy look, that it added a thousand-fold to the strength of his words, and stopped all question as to their truth.

"I think I have heard of you," said Maurice, coming forward. "Your name is Michael Polgrain. You are Lord Crehylls' foster-brother."

"Yes, sir," replied the other; "and I am a sailor."

"And somewhat of a smuggler, I fear," continued Maurice—"at least, so I have heard. I

wonder Lord Crehylls does not do something better for you; your blindness must make it hard for you to live."

"I have never had a gift from Lord Crehylls, and never will," replied Michael Polgrain, with sudden fierceness. "Heaven forbid that these hands of mine should ever touch his money!"

"Do you dislike him so much?" asked Madeline, eagerly.

The man winced at her question, and, letting his outstretched hands drop languidly, he said, in the old mournful tone,—“Dislike him? No; I would lay down my life for him any day; but that is no cause why I should take his money.”

Something in his tone pleased Madeline, and her cheeks flamed with a bright and sudden crimson.

"I wish I had some of your independent spirit," she cried. "The roughest, hardest calling is sweeter than the false ease of dependence."

"You have no call to say that, miss," returned Michael Polgrain, with extreme gravity. "No one has a greater right than you to the kindness of them you are with."

Again Madeline gave him a sharp glance of amazement and fear; but Maurice Pellew's presence prevented the question that rose to her lips.

"Ideas of independence may be exaggerated," observed Maurice, somewhat coldly. "As it appears to me, you would be just as independent

in a farm of Lord Crehylls as in pursuing an unlawful, and dangerous calling on the sea."

"You are mistaken, sir," returned Michael, in the same grave way; "living on Lord Crehylls' land would soon make me a madman; but on the sea I do not feel my affliction so much," he said, putting his hand over his eyes: "and as to unlawfulness, there's many, me among them, who see no harm in landing a keg on the shore; it is but free trade between country and country—that's all."

"Why do you feel your blindness less on the sea?" asked Madeline, quickly, stopping the argument against smuggling, which she saw springing to Mr. Pellew's lips.

"Because I take command of our craft at night," returned Michael; "my sight is clear then; and in darkness, in fog, or in danger, there is no one can steer so safely as I can. The excitement of a sea-faring life saves my wits, I think," said he, passing his hand dreamily over his forehead; "on land, I'm whisht as moonlight."

"Miss Sylvester," asked Mr. Pellew, impatiently, "shall we return to Crehylls? The storm is over."

"Will you step into the garden and take a look at the sky?" said Madeline, carelessly. "It would be useless, I think, to send this poor blind man."

Of course her request was instantly obeyed, and no sooner was Mr. Pellew gone, than she turned on Michael Polgrain a face, on which pride and anguish struggled fiercely.

"You seem to know me," she said in a bitter tone. "Mind, I do not deny my wretched identity—I am too proud for that; but I do not understand how you can recognise me, when it is so many years since I was last in this miserable place."

"It is not strange that I should know you, miss," returned Michael, in a tone more mournful than her own; "Mr. Lanyon promised me he would care for you; and so, hearing of you as his ward, I was prepared to recognise you when we met. You remember this house, miss?"

"I remember it," answered Madeline, drearily, "but I see no reason why you should ask me that question. In all the painful recollections of my childhood, I cannot recall your face. I find no place for you whatever in my life, therefore I am at a loss to comprehend, why you address me as you presume to do; and, above all, why you wish for a second interview with me. You spoke of a message from my most unhappy father; but that is impossible."

She covered her face with her hands, and though no groan or tear escaped her, it was evident her heart was racked by a passionate

sorrow—a sorrow she hated, and would never own.

“You are mistaken, miss,” said Michael Polgrain; “I saw your father just before he died: and as truly as I live in shadow and in sin, so true is it that he gave me a message for you.”

As he spoke, Maurice Pellew’s step echoed through the hall, and Madeline rising, said, in a hurried voice, “I will meet you here the day after to-morrow, at the same hour in the morning.”

“So let it be then, miss,” replied the man; “and Heaven help us both!”

“The storm has cleared off beautifully,” said Maurice as he entered; “but I fear we shall get back to Crehylls rather late for breakfast.”

“What does it matter?” said Madeline. “I am much obliged to you for the shelter you have given me,” she said to Michael Polgrain; and bending her head to him, she took Mr. Pellew’s arm, and without a word of thanks from him, both walked away, beneath the rain-dripping trees.

Standing at the door, Michael Polgrain watched Madeline’s retreating figure, till the leafy wood hid her from his sight.

“I don’t like her,” he said to himself with a heavy sigh. “I looked in her face for mercy and pity, but I saw none. But the lot I have drawn I must bear; it is too late to go back now.”

CHAPTER III.

ELL," said Maurice, gaily, "what do you think of that crack-brained smuggler? Did you perceive that, like yourself, he has his own ideas of justice? Smuggling, he asserted, was only fair free trade between country and country."

"And would it not be wise for nations to buy, and exchange without taxing each others' produce?" asked Madeline.

"That will be a question for some future generation," returned Maurice; "we are too busy now pommelling each other to consider it."

"Ah, there is another mistake," said Madeline, gloomily,— "war. What is there on the earth so cruel, so wicked, so stupid as war?—destroying and laying waste the labours of the poor, and dealing fire and death on every side. An army of succourers I could understand, but this is what we never see; men only congregate together to destroy, never to relieve. Truly this is a mad world, and I grow warped in it, I

think. To me, nearly all human customs seem a blunder—a blind, stupid blunder, following always the prejudices of the age. And as for human laws, they are worse, for they punish and kill the people, and never teach them. So far from being in advance of the civilization of their time, they are ever behind it. Recollect how in the old days they burned, beheaded, drew and quartered, pandering always to the ignorance and cruelty of the multitude! Ah, it is rare indeed when laws are on a par with the common sense of the period, leaving out of the question the mercy and the enlightenment of the few, who walk in the van of their age. And even now, in this year 1809, when we consider ourselves so advanced in wisdom, are we not still irritated by the sight of gibbets, and malefactors hanging in chains? And does a single day pass over these realms, that twenty or thirty miserable creatures do not perish beneath a hangman's hands? I tell you it is horrible!"

She spoke vehemently, with a rush of colour crimsoning her face; and Maurice, who had listened to her in silence, looked at her with sorrowful surprise.

"We cannot do without laws," he said, gravely. "If you were injured, for instance, would you take up your own cause, and do justice yourself?"

"Yes, I would," she answered fiercely. "If

it were possible to do so, I would deal out justice with my own hand !”

“ Miss Sylvester, you speak with the inexperience and impatience of youth,” returned Maurice; “ and it is well for you, that you have no power to change times and customs. Young and beautiful as you are, it amazes me that you permit such subjects to trouble your mind. You cannot mend the laws or alter the world ; then why not let your own duties, and happiness in it content you ?”

“ If I were happy, perhaps I could be selfish enough to ignore the misery of others,” said Madeline ; “ but I am not happy, Mr. Pellew ; and so far from deriving pain from the contemplation of the suffering on this groaning ball, I may, for aught you know, gain consolation from it, and patience to bear my own burden.”

Maurice Pellew, to whom such language from a girl seemed out of place, looked grieved, as he always did when she chose to show him the bitterness of her spirit.

“ How easily you exaggerate the crumpling of a rose-leaf into a real disaster,” he said. “ What burden can a young, flattered, beautiful girl have upon her soul, that she should take such gloomy views of the world ? And depend on it, in spite of all bad laws and blunders, this is, after all, a good world, filled with blessings for those who accept them.”

Madeline was silent a moment, but her heart swelled proudly at Maurice's rebuke. It was evident he looked upon her gloom as imaginary, arising only from the morbid musings of youth and ease of life.

"And I cannot undeceive him," she said to herself; "no, I can never tell him the truth while I live."

"Perhaps you are right," she replied. "In spite of wrong, of oppression, and of laws which sport with human life, the world may have blessings for those to whom they are given; but I affirm they are not bestowed upon all. Look at this bright sunshine around us; well, Michael Polgrain cannot see it, therefore for him it does not exist."

"But for you it does, Madeline," said Maurice, tenderly, "and so do all other blessings. You are wonderfully gifted, and formed to enjoy all the happiness of your lot."

"My lot is a bitter lot," she retorted hastily; "and you know nothing of it or of me, when you talk to me of happiness."

"I have known you since you were that high," said Maurice, stretching out his hand, above the green sward, at the height of a little child, "and I have always seen you beautiful and intelligent, surrounded by friends and the ease ensured by riches; and during all these years I have perceived nothing, Madeline, in your fate, to give a

cause for the root of bitterness within you." Madeline was silent, and Maurice went on, with a tinge of jealousy in his tone. "Unless, indeed, during your stay in Italy, some occurrence, of which I am ignorant, took place to grieve you."

Madeline had long ago taken her hand from his arm, and she now walked on by his side, still in silence.

"Madeline," he said, earnestly, "did some one during that time offer you his love?"

"If you will know it," she answered coldly, "I tell you—yes."

"And—and you loved him?" cried Maurice, as he stopped suddenly in the path, and looked at her with eyes full of jealousy and pain. "You loved him, and it is this which causes your moodiness and gloom."

"I hated him," said Madeline, smiling wistfully. "I did more—I positively feared and loathed the man, as one does a snake. Do not let us talk of him," she added, with a shudder, "I always feel as though he would kill me some day."

"Madeline," said Maurice, seizing her hand eagerly, "I have always loved you. I can scarcely remember the time, when you did not fill my heart from boyhood up to this day. My love, then, is nothing new to you; it has always been yours. Only tell me now that I may one day hope——"

But in his agitation words failed him, and he stopped, waiting breathlessly for her answer. When he first began to speak she blushed deeply ; but her face was death-white now, and the hand he held grew cold as ice.

“ Are you asking me to be your wife ?” she said.

For answer he put his arm around her, and pressed his lips to her cheek. She bore the caress silently, then she drew her hand from his, and said, in a wonderfully low, clear voice, “ Maurice, I would rather be wife to that man whom I have told you I hate, than I would marry you, and let you give me your name, and trust your happiness to my keeping.”

Her lover gazed at her as though her words had no meaning for him, and he strove vainly, with trembling lips, to demand an explanation. But Madeline turned away from him, apparently resolved he should not read her face, or utter a single pleading sentence.

“ I am in earnest,” she said, in a low, decided tone. “ Do not seek to change me. I can ally my fate with no man’s.”

They were just on the confines of the park as she spoke, and waving her hand to him, she turned into another path, leaving him sorrowful, angry, and bewildered.

Half an hour later, when more composed, but still with every feeling of his wounded love

writhing within him, Maurice Pellew entered the dining-room; he found Madeline seated at the breakfast table, calm as a statue. Crossing over to the opposite side, he took a chair by Mrs. Gilbert.

"Well," whispered that lady, "is it all settled? I am sure you two have had a long walk together this morning."

"Yes," returned Maurice, aloud; "we have been to St. Eglon's Hut."

It seemed an innocent observation, yet a blank silence followed it. Mr. Lanyon, with a look of sharper pain on his thin pale face, thrust his untasted cup from him; and Lord Crehylls, with a deep flush springing to his very brow, rose abruptly and left the room. The embarrassment that followed, added greatly to the confusion, and pain of Maurice Pellew's thoughts, and he was fain to finish his breakfast in haste, and escape into solitude.

CHAPTER IV.

ADELINE did not conceal from Mr. Lanyon, that she had refused Maurice Pellew. Some instinct told her that he wished much for this marriage, and she thought it best to let him understand her feelings. They were in the library at Crehylls when she spoke, telling him, in her own calm way, that she loved Maurice, but had refused to be his wife.

“But you are wrong,” said Mr. Lanyon. “Why refuse him if you love him?”

“Why!” exclaimed Madeline, while a bitter expression passed over her proud face,—“do you ask why?—you, you know who I am?”

Mr. Lanyon bent low over his book, and turned the leaves with a hurried hand before he replied to her; then he said, with an effort, “Why revert to this painful subject, Madeline! Has its sorrow or its stain touched you? Have I not from your infancy guarded you from the very shadow of it? Have I not so hedged you in with honour and respect, that no one guesses the truth? I have given you an honourable

name, and a loving home, and I only ask in return that I may see you happy."

The old man's voice shook, and he covered his eyes with his hand, as though shutting out some painful vision. The girl gazed at him till tears blinded her ; then she came forward, and knelt down by his side.

" I am not ungrateful," she said, leaning her cheek against his hand tenderly, " and I would be happy if I could ; but happiness is the one blessing you cannot give me. It will not flourish where there is no truth. The respect, the honour, the name you have given me are all false ; they surround me like a wall of cards, which a touch would fling down. You think that your generous pity, and charity have guarded me from the stain of my father's crime. I tell you no ; I have sat all my life long within the shadow of his guilt. Outwardly you might save me, but the shadow is within, upon my soul, and I writhe beneath it, like a degraded wretch beneath the branding iron. You do not know how proud I am, therefore you cannot fathom my sufferings. You cannot tell how at school, I shrank away from companionship, knowing that I gained it through a lie, and truth would only bring me scorn. You cannot tell, now that I am a woman, how I shrink from friendship and from love."

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the girl's sobs, for with her last words her grief

burst its bonds, and she wept bitterly. Yet had a painter been there to look upon her face, and upon that of the aged man, whose hand rested upon her bowed head, his was the face which the artist would choose as depicting the direr grief, the more dreadful woe.

"I have no words to comfort you with, my poor child," said Mr. Lanyon, steadying his trembling lips to speak; "but I wish that—that, for my sake, you could be happier."

Oh the blind selfishness and cruelty of a proud and stubborn nature! She did not see his grief; she did not hear the anguish in his voice. Feeling only her own pain, she was blind to his.

"I cannot be happy," she answered, bitterly. "The word is a mockery to me. At school, when other children played and sang, I wept alone. There was a mark upon me, which I could feel and see, if they could not. I was alone in the midst of them. I had a dreadful secret to keep. I had to use unchildish caution, unchildish resolve and cunning. How then could I have companions? The very bands which held me to their cold esteem were lies; my history, my name, my lineage, were lies; my whole life a lie, and I hate myself and it!"

She ended passionately, and struck her forehead with her clenched hand.

"You wrong yourself, Madeline," said Mr.

Lanyon, pitifully. "Your feelings are morbid ; you exaggerate with over-sensitiveness the sorrows of your position. No good man would visit upon you the sins of others."

Mr. Lanyon said this, with a spasm of pain crossing his features, and a nervous contraction of the hand, which showed that in speaking thus he conquered some great anguish.

"But the world would," returned Madeline. "It is only such a man as you, who would take pity on the orphan of——"

"Hush !" said Mr. Lanyon, hurriedly. "Say no more, I entreat you."

He seemed unable to bear the word she was about to speak, and he leant back in his chair with a white face and trembling hands.

"You see," cried Madeline, as her proud face flushed crimson, "even you, with all your generous pity, all your keen sense of justice—even you cannot bear the utterance of my father's name, or my father's crime. You seal them up, you ignore them, you try to forget them ; you cheat yourself when you look upon my face, and you strive to think me the child of an innocent man."

Her words were shadowed on Mr. Lanyon's face in a ghastly paleness like death, and he held out both his hands towards her as praying her to cease.

"Do you feel so much for me?" she said,

softly ; and taking his outstretched hands in hers, she bent over them and kissed them. But the action seemed painful to Mr. Lanyon beyond expression, and hurriedly repulsing her tenderness, he rose and paced the room.

Madeline's eyes followed him. Filled with the bitterness of wounded pride, and shivering from head to foot, she stood silent, with her arms folded tightly across her bosom. In a moment Mr. Lanyon saw her pain, and he came to her and put his arm round her kindly.

"Is it possible you can mistake me, Madeline?" he said. "You do indeed see all things through a distorted prism, if you can imagine I meant you an unkindness."

"I fancied the thoughts of my father overpowered you with loathing towards me," she replied, "as it would Maurice Pellew, if he knew what you know. But no caress of mine shall ever be repulsed by a lover, as you repulsed me just now."

"Madeline!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon, in a low, agitated tone, "you try me too deeply at times. You might spare the man, who has been a father to you from your childhood, so unjust an accusation as this. No thought of your unhappy parent ever repels me from your side; on the contrary, his memory and his fate have drawn me to you, and made me your guardian, and your friend."

The proud girl whom he addressed stood quivering beneath these words, turning their kindness into gall.

“I know I am an object of compassion,” she said; “and good and just men like you love to exercise their benevolence on the miserable, even when they are sullen, and wretched as I am. Yet, sometimes I wish you had left me alone,—left me unaided, my name unconcealed, my terrible orphanage, and the blot upon me unshrouded from a prying world. Then at least I should have an atmosphere of truth about me; I should not be borne down with falsehood as I am now. Perhaps you cannot see into my heart—you cannot guess what I suffer, when I hear myself addressed by a false name, and feel myself covered by the false mantle of honour, which your guardianship, and the pretence of your relationship, have thrown over me.”

She spoke these last words in a mournful tone, and fixed her eyes on Mr. Lanyon with a look of proud despair.

“Madeline, you grieve me to the heart,” replied her guardian. “You have all the comforts, all the honour which my wealth and station can give you; added to these you have talent, and innocence, and beauty—these three last all your own. Cannot you fling off morbid thoughts, and let these gifts suffice for your happiness?”

“Oh, if you only knew,” returned the girl,

lifting up her voice in anguish, "how far beyond these I prize truth and justice, you would not wonder at my sorrow. It is the falsehood of my position that crushes me to the earth. There are times when the burden of this deceit is so heavy, that I long to shriek aloud the truth to the whole gaping world."

Mr. Lanyon was silent, but he trembled excessively, and again he covered his shrinking eyes with one hand, while his adopted daughter clung to his other arm, weighing it down with her passionate clasp.

"I have a nature which loves truth," she continued, feverishly. "I am too proud to lie. I hate—I abhor all falsehood, all deceit, all dishonour. Yet see—think what I have been forced to do! What meanness, what fencing, what subterfuge my shrinking soul has practised! To a proud heart like mine such things have been a daily draught of gall. I do not despise myself for the crime of my father; it is for my own guilt I hate myself and long to die."

She suddenly relinquished her feverish grasp of her listener's arm, and sinking to the floor, she buried her face in her hands. Mr. Lanyon stood by her, looking down on her with unspeakable woe shadowed on his own face.

"Madeline," he said, softly, "it is true that I have never read your heart till to-day; I could not guess you suffered thus. From the first

hour of your forlorn, and terrible orphanage I have succoured you, and I dared to hope that my hand had shielded you from pain—my care had guarded you from the sorrow, the shame, the stain——” he ceased a moment, overcome by a rush of bitter thought. “But the hope I had presumed to cherish was vain,” he continued, in a desolate voice, “and I see that all I have done for your happiness, has only heaped greater misery on your unhappy head—and on mine,—on mine,” he added wildly.

Madeline, lost as she was in the contemplation of her own sorrow, yet seemed touched by this grief.

“Forgive me,” she said, more gently; “I would not have shown you my wretchedness if I could have helped it, but I am mad to-day. I have just flung from out my heart all my love, all my hopes of earthly happiness—I have just given up Maurice Pellew.”

“And there, I tell you again, that you are wrong, Madeline,” persisted Mr. Lanyon in an eager voice. “Pellew loves you with his whole soul. Why cannot you be his wife, and make him and yourself happy?”

“Because I am a liar,” she answered, as she bent her head still lower to the ground; “and Maurice Pellew shall never take a liar to his heart. I am no snake to creep into a man’s bosom, and sting him with the agony of such a

life as mine. What right have I to a place by his hearth?"

"Every right, Madeline," replied Mr. Lanyon. "You love him, and he has chosen you. You possess the beauty, the talent, the qualities he admires; he asks for no more in a wife than he finds in you."

"Yes, he asks for honour," she cried, springing up suddenly; "he expects in the mother of his children an unsullied name, like his own; and mine, through my father's guilt, is dragged down into the dust; therefore I cannot be his wife. Do you not see that truth and justice demand this sacrifice of me?"

"Justice! justice!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon, stretching his hand towards her feebly; "what do you know of justice, Madeline?"

"I know this," she said, in a low voice, "that my father suffered justly; therefore I never complain of the sentence, which has made me what I am. Neither do I murmur against my own sufferings: they are just also. And I love justice so well, that I will never make another suffer unjustly. If I allied my secret load of sorrow, and of shame to Maurice Pellew's free soul, bowing it down with unmerited pain, I should commit an act of injustice so abhorrent to my nature, that I prefer desolation, loneliness, death—anything, rather than commit such a wrong."

"Madeline, Madeline!" cried Mr. Lanyon; and groping like a blind man, he sank into a chair, gazing at her with bewildered eyes.

"Are you frightened at my vehemence?" asked Madeline, sadly. "I wish you could see into my soul; I wish you could read there all my scorn and hatred of wrong, of injustice, of falsehood. Do not pity me, that I give up my love for Maurice. It is a relief, a joy to me unspeakable, to suffer for justice' sake, and for truth. I, whose ignoble sufferings have been caused by a deceitful shrinking from truth, may well feel glad at last to suffer in a good cause."

"And do you renounce marriage for ever?" said Mr. Lanyon. "Are you so resolved—you, so young?"

"Yes," she replied, "unless I can find my equal: a man who has suffered as I have—a man whose name is a reproach, an infamy, as mine is."

"Madeline," said her guardian, "this is pride, not love of justice or of truth."

"It is all three," she answered, drearily. Then she utterly broke down, and crying, "Maurice, Maurice!" she flung herself on the ground, writhing in her proud, passionate misery, like a wounded bird.

"Madeline, my poor child, can I do nothing for you?" asked Mr. Lanyon, in a voice which quivered with a strange pathos.

"Nothing," she replied, in a hopeless tone.

"What can be done for a girl like me?" she asked, fixing her large eyes on him with a look of vacant woe.

Mr. Lanyon made her no answer, and in the silence that fell down between them, there broke the twittering of birds, and the rustle of Summer leaves. Something in these peaceful sounds, or in the stillness and sorrow of her guardian's face, softened the unhappy girl, and trailing herself towards him, without rising, she laid her head upon his knees and covered his hands with her tears.

"Do not hate me for my grief," she said, pleadingly; "and bear with me when I speak out of the bitterness of my heart. Remember, you are the sole friend I have upon earth, with whom I can dare give myself the luxury, and the relief of truth. To the world I am the gay, the happy, the envied Miss Sylvester; to you, and to you only, I am the miserable, heart-broken daughter of a man who lies in a shameful grave."

"I never forget any of this, Madeline," returned Mr. Lanyon, "therefore I bear with you gently, and ever will do so, though you torture me to death."

This was the first reproach Madeline had heard from her guardian's lips, and she looked up at him hastily.

"As for your father," he continued, "his name is engraven on my brain. Do not speak of him again; I cannot, I will not bear it."

He spoke with passion, and this sudden change from his usual calm gentleness startled Madeline.

"Is there anything I have left undone, unsaid," continued Mr. Lanyon, vehemently, "to prove my compassion, my sorrow for that unhappy man? Have I not shielded his child from penury, and the contempt of the world? Have I not given her the gentle tending, the high culture, the delicate refinement, that could never have been hers in her own miserable home?"

He uttered this as if to himself, and with eyes fixed upon some phantom in the air.

"All you have done for me," said Madeline, mournfully, "has not fallen wasted, dead, upon an ungrateful mind. I repay you by a love and reverence past words. Seeing, as I do, how callous and unjust is the world, I marvel more and more, every day of my life, at the wonderful and gentle charity of the man, who took such pity on an outcast child, that he gathered her to his bosom as a daughter. You see I am now speaking calmly; and even in passion I do you justice; but in calmness I do more, I bow down in wonder before your goodness and your love."

"Do I want thanks, Madeline, or flattery?" cried Mr. Lanyon, almost fiercely. "Cease, child, cease!"

"No," she answered, "hear me out. It is not all praise that I am going to utter. I thank you for succouring me, yet I still believe my

path would have been less bitter, had you left me to the fate that awaited me. I should have been a drudge at a workhouse, a parish apprentice at a farm, a poor, coarse, untaught slave all my life long. But to counterbalance this, I should have had truth and openness on my side. My name would be my own, my story would be known to all; and if it gained me contempt from some, it would have wrung pity from better hearts. And perhaps, hard as I should have been, I might have cared for neither. Now, it is true you have given me culture, refinement, gentle breeding; but all these mean only the power to suffer—yes, to suffer: that is the gift you have laid upon me. To the child who was wrapped in a web of mystery and deceit, you taught truth and religion; to the woman whose whole life must be a lie, you have given passionate honour, passionate love of honesty and of justice. I belie my nature every day; and when I writhe and suffer you blame me. And it is you who are to blame, because you have striven by falsehood to ward from my miserable head, that great curse which says, ‘The sins of the father shall descend upon the children.’”

Mr. Lanyon heard her in a silence which held down within him a passion, and a woe deeper than any her speech could touch. His face was inexpressibly pale and wan as he turned it towards her, and laid his hand gently on her fair hair.

"No, Madeline, not on the children. The sins of the father must not descend on innocent heads," he said, steadfastly; "that shall never be."

"But it is so, it must be so," she persisted, laying her hand upon her heart. "I feel it here."

Mr. Lanyon smiled sadly.

"You are far happier than you think, Madeline," he returned, gazing in her face wistfully. "You have youth, beauty, innocence, and love. Why then do you let the life and death of a man you can scarcely remember, disturb your peace?"

"Because he was my father," she replied; "and so far from scarcely remembering him, every word and look of his is scorched upon my memory."

"And remembering him, Madeline, can you say justly, that he was as good a father to you as I have been and am?" said Mr. Lanyon.

"No," returned the girl, frankly, "I cannot say it; yet he loved me, and you do not."

A flush rose swiftly on Mr. Lanyon's face as she spoke.

"That is a most cruel speech, Madeline," he said, coldly. "Ask yourself whether I do not bear words from your lips, which I would not brook from any other. Have I not suffered calmly to-day all your reproaches, all your bitterness?"

"Yes, you have borne with me calmly," she replied. "Had you loved me, you might perhaps in your anger have smitten me to the earth. Do

not think this is a new reproach," she continued, in a tone of deep sadness. "No; I can understand full well, that the horror which you have of crime, and the loathing you feel at my being allied to it, have shut up your heart from loving me. Ah, you cannot tell how often I have seen you, even when I was a child, shrink away from a caress of mine! And I do not complain of it, though I read daily your secret repugnance even to the sight of my face. I know myself only a poor leper, stained with my father's shame, and I dare not hope for love. Then think of the loneliness in which my soul lives through these things; think what it is to feel in secret the weight of a great crime, while bearing outwardly to the world, all the marks and semblance of innocence and honour!"

Mr. Lanyon's eyes, which had been fixed on hers, fell, and his sunken cheeks took an ashen and ghastly hue.

"Girl, girl! your words are poniards!" he cried, hurriedly.

"Yet they do not speak all the sharpness of my woe," continued Madeline. "But a man like you, whose memory is pure, whose long life is unsullied, can scarce understand my burden. Yet I have as honourable a mind as you. I, too, loathe crime, and shudder at the blood which runs in my veins; but I have not, like you, the right to despise it."

"You wrong me," cried the old man, passionately. "I have feelings of tenderness and pity for you, that you do not dream of."

"But no love," interposed Madeline, turning from him sadly. "I have seen you shudder as your eye fell upon my face. Oh, believe me, I know too well what feelings I inspire in an honourable heart. Let us talk no more of it. I am cruel to pain you so long with my presence and my bitter thoughts."

She glided to the door, and here she turned and looked upon him. He sat in his large chair like a shrunken shadow of old age, with his head drooping forward resting on his thin hand, and his eyes fixed vacantly on the floor. For a moment Madeline hesitated, as though she would fain go to him with words of comfort; but the morbid gloom and pride of her nature stepped in and conquered the kindly wish.

"No," she said to herself, disdainfully, "I will not try to console him; he would but shudder at a kind touch or loving word from me."

She passed out of the room, and closed the door with a silent hand; but her shadow, like a dreadful blight, still rested on the shrunken figure in the chair, and not all the sunshine, which poured upon him in a golden flood, could lift it from his heart.

CHAPTER V.

ATHER," said a fresh, clear voice, "I have been looking for you." And Lady Crehylls, radiant in her youth and loveliness, came in softly, and stood by her father's chair. "We want you to come and wish some of the people good-bye; they are going."

"Certainly, my dear," returned Mr. Lanyon, vaguely. "Which of your guests are leaving?"

"Oh, nearly all of them," replied his daughter, and taking his arm, she drew him from the library to the hall, where many of those, who had passed the night after the ball at the Castle, were now uttering farewells to each other, and to their host. Lord Crehylls seemed full of life and gaiety, his clear mellow voice ringing with the joyousness of youth, as he spoke words of hospitality and kindness to all around. And Mr. Lanyon's care-worn face lit up with a sudden smile as he contemplated him—a smile which beamed with a still fuller pleasure, when his eyes turned on the innocent, happy look of his

daughter. Never had she seemed to him more lovely, more dear than to-day, when her girlish beauty and the joy which beamed, as it were, unconsciously around her presence, came to him in contrast with the pale and angry gloom of Madeline's chiselled face.

At length, as carriage after carriage rolled away, there remained only at the door Justice Pydar's old-fashioned chariot, and Mrs. Gilbert's modern phaeton.

"You'll come and see me soon," said the old gentleman as he shook hands with his young host. "I shall keep all the pheasants for you. And bring your young friend, Pellew, with you, if he will do me the pleasure to come. I like him much. Ah, by the bye, where is he? I have not said good-bye to him."

"I am here," answered Maurice, coming out of an arched doorway. "I was just about to ask whether you, or Mrs. Gilbert would kindly give me a lift as far as the coach road. I want to meet the London mail, which passes at four o'clock."

"You can't mean that you are going back to town?" cried Lord Crehylls. "I really wont allow that, Pellew."

"I fear I must go," replied Maurice, as he faltered out some excuse about letters and pressing business. "And I am afraid, Mr. Pydar," he continued, "that I shall not be able to avail myself

of the invitation you so kindly extended to me just now ; for I am obliged to remain in London all the autumn and winter. I fancy it will be long before I shall visit Cornwall again."

He could not repress the slight agitation and trembling of the lip with which he said this ; and as he turned away to hide it, he met Mr. Lanyon's earnest gaze. The pale worn face, whose lines he had often marked with a kind of faint wonder, bore now a shadow of doubt and pain, and Maurice instantly guessed that he saw into his heart, and knew of Madeline's rejection of his love.

"Can she have told him?" he thought ; and the blood rushed to his heart with a sudden hope.

"You must not go," said Mr. Lanyon, painfully. "You have promised to go back to Penkivel with Madeline and me, and I will not give up your promise."

"No, indeed," cried Lady Crehylls, eagerly, "we are not going to part with you so easily, Mr. Pellew. And where is Madeline? What will she say about it? Go and find Miss Sylvester," she said to a servant, who was standing by the hall door.

Maurice heard this command with great embarrassment.

"It will be quite impossible for me to return with you to Penkivel," he said to Mr. Lanyon, in a low voice ; "it would pain me too much."

"Ah, I see you mean to stay," observed old Mr. Pydar; "so I wish you good-bye for a time." So saying, he retreated to his chariot, and drove away.

At this moment the servant returned who had gone for Madeline, and said, "Miss Sylvester is in her room, indisposed, my lady. She begs you will excuse her from coming down. She sends her compliments to Mr. Pellew, and wishes him a pleasant journey."

Maurice's face flamed, and he put out his hand hurriedly to say good-bye to Mr. Lanyon. Lord and Lady Crehylls looked both hurt and surprised, but Mrs. Gilbert smiled.

"His Egyptian queen has refused him," she said to herself, "and the sooner he escapes his misery the better for him. Mr. Pellew," she cried, "if you really wish to catch the mail, it is time we departed."

"I do, indeed," said Maurice, hurrying forward. "A thousand thanks, Lady Crehylls, for all your kindness; we shall meet this winter in London, I hope."

Mr. Lanyon heard this—heard also a tremor in his voice which told of the pain hidden, but not subdued, and there rose before him, pale and reproachful, the face of Madeline. She loved this man, she had confessed it, and with her bitter and proud spirit what would her life be without this saving love? Wrecked, utterly wrecked and

miserable, a curse to herself, and perhaps to others. But with this kind true heart by her side, peace and happiness would spring up in her soul, and the morbid bitterness, which she now cherished perversely, would gradually die away. On the other side, what a root of anguish this love would be; what a source of spite and pain and anger for the future, adding a double blight to her life, if now in her proud misery she sent this man from her!

"And from all this I can save her by a single word, if I will," said Mr. Lanyon to himself. "But what a word! No, I cannot do it. He must go."

At this instant Maurice's hand clasped Mr. Lanyon's, and bending low, he whispered, "Tell Madeline I go for her sake. I would not pain her by my presence a moment longer, than I could help."

He turned away. Mrs. Gilbert was already in the phaeton; her voice was calling to him to be quick. Another moment he would be gone, and Madeline's whole life would be barren and hopeless. Mr. Lanyon's breath came painfully and his heart trembled.

"No; there has been wrong enough," he thought. "This further evil shall not fall upon her head, if I can hold it back. Maurice, Maurice!" he cried aloud.

Somewhat surprised, the young man hurried

back to him, and leant forward to catch the faint words he spoke.

“Maurice,” said he, “you must stay; my ward wishes it. I have a message for you from her.”

Maurice stayed; and Mrs. Gilbert, with eyes full of astonishment, caught up the reins, and drove away.

“Come to me this evening in the library,” said Mr. Lanyon. “I have much to say to you. I cannot bear it now; I am not well to-day. I think I shall go and rest awhile.”

With a heart full of hope, Maurice watched his bent and shrunken figure as he retreated, scarcely seeing him; but Lady Crehylls, whose eyes followed him also, looked flushed and anxious. And as he disappeared behind the great folding doors of the hall, she turned her steps the same way, silent and thoughtful.

Mr. Lanyon went straight to his own room, and placed before him on a table, a small, old-fashioned desk, brass bound, and firmly locked. He opened it by a key which hung at his watch chain, and taking up a bundle of papers, tied and sealed, he unfastened it, and spread them on the desk. As he did this, there was a gentle tap at the door, and laying his hand hurriedly on the letters, he was about to close the desk, when the lock turned softly, and his daughter, with her boy in her arms, entered, and coming up to him tenderly, she laid her lips on his brow.

“Father, I thought you looked tired and ill,” she said; “so baby and I have come to have a cosy chat, and cheer you up a little. Kiss grandpapa, little one.”

The child put his soft arms round the old man’s neck, and with cherry lips he kissed him, patting his withered cheek with his tiny hand, and laughing gleefully.

“He is a fine little fellow,” said Mr. Lanyon, looking at him proudly, “and you are very happy, Agatha, my dear. May God keep you so!”

“Why, father, my dear father, what makes you so sad and earnest to-day?” cried his daughter, leaning her fair young face upon his shoulder. “Of course I am happy. You know how good and loving Geoffrey is; and then I have you and baby, and all the other blessings that I so often forget to count—wealth, honour, position—which would be nothing to me though, without Geoffrey and you, and my darling here.”

She kissed the child, and the two fair cheeks lay close together, the mother’s scarcely less fresh and smooth than the rosy infant’s. With his trembling hand still spread upon his desk on the faded letters, Mr. Lanyon gazed on this pretty picture with shrinking woe-worn eyes.

“Ah, Agatha, my child, human happiness is built upon sand!” he said. “A touch—a word destroys it often. Do not make idols of your earthly treasures, lest they should be taken from you.”

“My dear father,” returned the young wife and mother, kneeling down by him, and enclosing him and her child in her two white, rounded arms, “surely my treasures are given to me to love; and to my mind it would be but poor wisdom to give them a cold half love.”

Kneeling as she was now, her shining blue eyes were almost on a level with the desk, and her glance fell on the packet of letters beneath her father’s hand. They were in her husband’s writing.

“Old letters of Geoffrey’s!” she said eagerly. “What are they about, father—may I see them?”

“Only business, my dear,” he replied—“business between me and him when he was a lad, and I was his guardian. They would not interest you, Agatha.”

Mr. Lanyon strove to speak calmly, but there was something forced and unnatural in the quiet of his tone.

“Business!” repeated his daughter, peering curiously on the desk. “What does this mean—‘Madeline, my beautiful Madeline?’ Of what Madeline is he writing?”

The next instant Lady Crehylls gazed at her father with amazement, as he closed the desk with quivering eager hand, and locked it.

“He means Madeline Sylvester, my love,” he replied, in a hurried voice; “but you need not

be jealous ; she was only six years old when these letters were written."

Lady Crehylls believed him ; and yet his agitation and the feverish flush in his pale face gave her a strange, uneasy feeling, such as her heart had never trembled with before in all her married life.

" You know, Agatha," said Mr. Lanyon, more softly, " Geoffrey was very fond of Madeline as a child."

" Was he ?" said Lady Crehylls, a little coldly ; " then I suppose, father, she was more pleasant as a child, than she is as a girl. Her pride and gloom now often sadden me. Come, let me see what Geoffrey said about her, when she was his ' beautiful Madeline.' "

She laid her hand playfully on the key of the desk ; but Mr. Lanyon thrust it aside hastily. " Not now, my dear," he said ; " some other time you may read Geoffrey's boyish epistles if you choose, but I am busy now—I have letters to write. The boy tires me, Agatha. You had better take him to his nurse."

He put his little grandson down from off his knee, kissing him as he let him go ; but still the young mother was slightly hurt, and as she went away, leading her boy by the hand, she bore with her that faint, small cloud of care which, appearing only as a speck on the horizon, might yet spread over all the sky, and darken the sun

of her life's happiness for ever. As her slight fragile figure disappeared, as her pretty delicate hand closed the door, Mr. Lanyon sighed deeply, and a strange shiver shook his feeble frame.

"No ; I cannot speak," he said to himself—"I cannot put her happiness and her life in Maurice Pellew's hands. I must bear this secret alone to the end. But Madeline—ah, if I am silent, it is her happiness I crush, her life I fling away. Oh if there were some middle course!—if there were something I could do, which would save them both ! Let me reflect—let me take counsel with myself."

He placed his hand upon his brow, and remained a few moments in deep thought ; then rising, he bolted the door, and again unlocking his desk, he took from it the small packet of faded letters, and read them through. This done, he laid them down with a great sigh of relief.

"There are no marks of guilt here," he said, putting his hand upon them. "There is nothing here but a boy's fancy—a boy's folly. The story Polgrain told me is a mad dream of his. I will shake it off. I will believe it no more. Even if true, I cannot destroy my daughter. But it is not true ; it is the vision of a crazed brain—the man was guilty, and Madeline must bear her fate."

As he said this, he put the letters in the desk hastily, as though he longed to shut them from

his sight again ; but the rough movement brought before his eyes a newspaper, and this he seized with an eager grasp.

“ Ah ! I had forgotten this,” he said. “ I could not tell Maurice Pellew, but I can let him read for himself ; and if he truly loves Madeline, this will not change his love. Here then is the middle course I wished for ; here is the chance of saving her that I desired ; not a generous one perhaps, but still the best I have.”

He slowly relocked his desk ; and taking the paper with him, he left the room with a feeble step.

CHAPTER VI.

ADELINE had wept till her tears were spent. She was not a woman to weep quietly, her grief was a sort of fury, in which she had torn off her ornaments, and loosened her long thick hair, which hung tangled about her shoulders, as with her head resting on her hands she sat silent, numbed by her own despair.

“Madeline,” said a sweet gentle voice, “wont you open the door? I want to speak with you.”

It was Lady Crehylls, and Madeline bore towards her one of those strange, undefinable dislikes which arise in jealous natures, apparently without reason. To admit her now, to let her in upon these white cheeks, these traces of tears and passion, irritated her already galled spirit, yet she could think of no excuse for denying her admission. She withdrew the bolts silently, and while the closed door still stood between her and Agatha Crehylls she let her dark eyes flash forth all her hate and misery, but as it moved on its hinges, and the lady entered, her eye-lids fell,

and going back a step she stood with pale set face, and hands drooping by her side.

"You want me, Lady Crehylls," she said, coldly.

"My dear Madeline," returned the other, "how often must I beg you to call me Agatha? You forget how it pleases my father to see us like sisters."

She put her hand on the girl's shoulder, and would have kissed her, but Madeline drew back.

"Sisters!" she said slowly; "the word is such a mockery to me, that it embitters my lips like a drink of gall. If I call you Agatha, in what will that make us like sisters, or bring into our fates the shadow of a similarity?"

"My dear love," said Lady Crehylls, pityingly, "I know you are full of sorrow to-day. I guess it all, and I come to give you good news. Mr. Pellew has not left the Castle; he is still here."

A flush of crimson swept over Madeline's face.

"Why does he stay?" she cried. "He has no right to torture me like this. Agatha, I cannot see him. I shall remain in my room till he is gone."

Lady Crehylls gazed at her with astonishment.

"This is folly indeed, Madeline," she said, gravely. "Mr. Pellew loves you, and you return his affection. Under what pretext then do you fling away his happiness and your own? Do you do this only to gratify your moody temper?"

"Yes ; think so, if you will," returned Madeline. "What does it matter?"

"It matters through your whole life," replied Lady Crehylls, in a gentle, serious voice. "It matters this, Madeline, that with Maurice Pellew by your side you will be a good and a happy woman, but without him you will be neither."

"I know it," said Madeline, gloomily. "Go away—do go away."

But Lady Crehylls drew nearer to her, and in spite of the shiver that ran through Madeline's frame, she put her arm about her tenderly, and kissed her.

"What has gone wrong, Madeline?" she said, softly. "Come, tell me, and I promise you I will set it straight, even if the whole world is gone awry." Madeline, however, was silent.

"You know, my dear," continued the young wife, "my father will do anything I ask him, and so will Geoffrey. If, then, you think that either of them has it in his power to help you, say so, Madeline, and it shall be done."

"She boasts of her power," thought Madeline—"this woman with a loving husband and father, and she boasts of it to me. Does she want me to hate her?" But she still kept silent, suffering the other's embrace, suffering even her tears coldly.

"You wont speak, Madeline?" said Lady Crehylls, as her eyes filled with disappointment

and wounded feeling. "I am so sorry for you, my dear. I want to help you, if you will let me."

"But there is no help for me in the world," returned Madeline, calmly. "Why don't you believe me when I say it? I tell you there is none. Lord Crehylls can do nothing for me, and your father can do no more than he has done."

"Have you quarrelled with Maurice Pellew?" asked Lady Crehylls, eagerly. "Oh, Madeline, be reconciled; he loves you so dearly."

"I have not quarrelled with him," she answered, extricating herself from Agatha's embracing arm. "I am not given to quarrels; but this I know of myself, that a quarrel with me would be deadly. I should never make it up."

"You are a strange girl," said her friend, looking at her sorrowfully. "Perhaps, Madeline, you think my father will not consent to your marriage, and you are too proud to ask it."

"You are mistaken," said Madeline. "Your father this morning pressed me to accept Maurice——"

"And you refused?" interrupted her companion.

"And I refused," said Madeline.

"Then you do not love him," said Lady Crehylls, coldly, "and I am sorry I have asked him to stay."

As she spoke, Madeline turned towards her, and Lady Crehylls saw that her face was without

colour to the lips, and her eyes were strangely wild.

"You say so," she cried fiercely, "who think only of the love that gratifies itself. But there is a greater and a better love, which refuses all happiness, and deliberately chooses suffering, rather than let the shadow of sorrow pass over a beloved head. Oh why should I speak of that love to you?—to you, the prosperous, noble lady, who brought your husband a rich dower, and an honourable name?"

"What mattered my name and my fortune?" said Lady Crehylls, with some heat. "Geoffrey cared only for me. And I do not understand your words, Madeline. What sorrow would you bring on Mr. Pellew?"

"Do not ask me," returned the girl, mournfully; "let your father tell you, if he will. It is by his wish, not mine, that my history has been kept a secret. I am reckless now, and I care not who knows it."

She flung herself on the floor, where she sat with her head drooping forward on her knees, and her long hair covering her like a mantle. For a moment, Lady Crehylls contemplated this desponding, gloomy figure in silence; then she said, in a trembling voice—"Madeline, I—I have fancied, sometimes, that my father had some sorrow weighing on his heart, but I never guessed it had aught to do with you. If, by sharing the

secret, I could take the burden of it, I would ; but if not, I will not ask him for it."

"As you please," said Madeline, in the quiet tone of hopelessness.

"Understand me, my dear," continued Lady Crehylls, leaning over her anxiously : "I am a wife : I can have no secrets from my husband ; therefore I dare not ask my father to tell me anything which it might pain him to let Geoffrey know."

Madeline's head sank yet lower, and her small hands covered her face.

"Ah, guard your happiness," she returned, in the same low tone ; "perfect confidence is the key-stone of married peace. Say no more to me of love and marriage, for if I became a wife my heart would be a sealed book to my husband for ever."

Lady Crehylls looked grieved and frightened ; she drew back a little, saying, "You are, doubtless, the best judge yourself, Madeline, of the course you ought to follow. Perhaps you have done right to reject Maurice Pellew."

Madeline started up from the floor instantly.

"Do you suspect me?" she said, as her eyes blazed. "Do you think me less worthy of a good man's love than you are ? How dare you to insult me in that cold, meek cruel way of yours ? How dare you do me such a bitter wrong ?"

Lady Crehylls, who was a woman of an exceedingly timid nature, and of a most generous

heart, grieved at the meaning Madeline had applied to her words ; she held out her hands pleadingly, while tears started to her eyes.

“ I thought, Madeline, you alluded to your gloomy temperament,” she said, “ and to this unhappy secret of which you speak, as, both combined, unfitting you for the duties of a wife. I had no other thought but that when I spoke. You wrong yourself when you accuse me of insulting you.”

Madeline took the proffered hand, half in shame, half in sorrow.

“ You see,” she murmured, “ how full of suspicion and unjust thought I am. I cannot even have a friend. How long would a husband love me ? And yet——” Here she turned suddenly, and still holding the hand of Agatha Crehylls, she led her to the tall pierglass, which stood between the high windows. “ Look !” she continued, more softly, as the two fair figures flashed upon them from the mirror ; “ can you see there, Agatha, any cause why life for me should be a blank desert, without hope and without joy ?”

“ There is no cause,” replied Lady Crehylls, “ except, Madeline, in your morbid nature, which rejects the happiness offered you.”

“ So I might say to you, were my soul in your soul’s place,” said the girl, in the same gentle way. “ I am as full of words as you ;

and were I as happy, I might be as blind. I, too, could deal out reproof and counsel, and bruise a wounded heart as well as you."

"I have no wish to wound you, Madeline," interposed her companion, quickly. "Remember, your family history is unknown to me. I am not, therefore, to blame if an inadvertent word sometimes touches a sorrow of which I am ignorant. But I still warn you that, whatever the cause of your grief may be, it is both unwise and wicked to brood over it, and allow it poison the springs of life."

Lady Crehylls here would have released her hand from Madeline's, but the girl's clasp tightened on her fingers, and raising her other hand, she pointed to the glass.

"Can I help it, Agatha, if I am born with this face, and you with that?" she said. "Your words, like a hammer in the hands of a blind man, strike the air only. You might as reasonably accuse me of having gray eyes, as of poisoning my own happiness. I have had no power in either case. Circumstances are all—circumstances are everything. Look upon my face and your own; we are gifted alike with rare beauty—I speak the simple truth without vanity—and I claim to have as high a soul as yours, talents perhaps greater, and a heart whose every beat is as true to a noble love as yours can be; and yet no single blessing that you possess can I ever dare

to hope for. No, it would be a crime in me to ally myself to an honourable man; while to you marriage was but another garland in your wreath of joys. Here, then, you see the images of two women, formed alike by nature for happiness, and yet one is, and must be, hopeless. What makes the difference between us, Agatha? Circumstances which we could not help—circumstances which we neither made nor marred—circumstances which our souls were not asked either to choose or to reject. Helplessly, and without choice, I was thrust into the place I fill, and I find it a narrow dungeon; with equal helplessness you awake in your niche, and discover loving arms around you, and flowers beneath your feet at every step. We can neither of us help it, Agatha; but be merciful to me, when at times I beat my hands against the bars of my prison, and cry vainly for the love and light that can never be mine.”

She dropped her companion's hand coldly, calmly, as she had held it, and Lady Crehylls, standing silent and sorrowful, saw her beautiful face and her stately figure pass slowly out of the glass like a fading vision. Tears stood in her own eyes when she turned away, saying, wistfully, “Without seeking, Madeline, to pry into affairs known perhaps only to my father and yourself, tell me, is there anything I can do for you? or can Geoffrey help you?”

Madeline shook her head without reply, and the weary look in her eyes so plainly said—Leave me; let me commune with my own heart and be still—that Lady Crehylls quitted her hastily, half in wonder, half in fear. And as instinctively, almost unwittingly, she sought the free air, and wandered away upon the soft turf, beneath the shadow of leaves and the fragrance of blossom, she felt that the small cloud of care, which her heart had borne in quitting her father, had deepened in gloom and intensity since she had spoken with Madeline Sylvester.

CHAPTER VII.

AURICE PELLEW watched for the evening shadows with an impatience scarcely born of hope; his was rather the eagerness which prefers a gloomy certainty to a feverish suspense. Madeline had desired that he should stay; he obeyed her, but beyond the expectation of receiving some explanation, which might soften his rejection, he did not anticipate any alteration in their relative positions. A woman of so inflexible a nature was not likely to change her mind. Hence he felt no surprise when he saw Madeline's chair vacant at dinner, and if it gave him a momentary pleasure to perceive that she was not indifferent enough to meet him calmly, and would not put herself to the test, this faded instantly in the thought that her absence also proved how firm was her resolve to abide by her first decision. The dinner seemed to him insufferably long and dull, and he almost started when Lady Crehylls addressed him.

“ You took shelter this morning at St. Eglon's

Hut," she said. "What do you think of that gloomy place?"

"I saw it in a storm," he answered, "and it certainly had a most forlorn look; the trees press on it so closely, and the garden is a wilderness; but were all this put in order, I think it might be made a pleasant place in sunshine."

"Ah, in sunshine," returned Lady Crehylls; "but the spot is so unlucky, I believe it never catches a glimpse of the sun. At all events I have never made up a party to visit it that we did not find a dull, gray sky, or clouds weeping floods of rain. In fact, this dilapidated house is a great eyesore on the cliff, and I want Geoffrey to pull it down."

Evidently St. Eglon's Hut was a slight bone of contention between Lord Crehylls and his wife, for he listened to her with a vexed air, and made no reply to her remark.

"It would be a pity to pull it down," said Maurice; "it would be better to put it in order, and get a cheerful tenant for it."

"A tenant for St. Eglon's Hut!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon. "No, no—I hope not. Who is talking of such a thing?"

"No one, my dear sir," returned Lord Crehylls. "I assure you I have no intention of letting it," he said, drily, addressing himself to Maurice. Then, as though he felt he had been ungracious, he added, in a tone of apology,

"The fact is, my conscience will scarcely allow me to take rent for such a nest of ague and rheumatism; and I should certainly never get a sane tenant. It would only be a madman who would take such a place."

Remembering Michael Polgrain had spoken of a former tenant, Maurice would have asked who he was; but when some subject is mooted painful to another, though the pain may not find expression either by word or look, an indefinable shadow of it falls on the mind, restraining speech, and this kept back the question from his lips. He changed the subject abruptly.

"Lady Crehylls was speaking of sunshine just now," he said; "that reminds me of the singular man I met this morning, who declared he never saw the sun."

"You mean Michael Polgrain," returned Lord Crehylls. "Yes, he is quite mad on that point, poor fellow! His sight is perfectly sound, and yet he persists in declaring himself half-blind."

"We have a superstition in Cornwall," observed Lady Crehylls, "that a perjurer—one who by false swearing has taken away the life of another—never sees sunshine; but I believe poor Michael was never a witness on any trial. Father, she said, and she raised her voice slightly, "have you ever heard of Michael Polgrain giving evidence in a court of justice?"

Mr. Lanyon had risen from his chair, and

his sharp, pinched face looked haggard and wild.

"Evidence!" he cried, "no! What evidence could Michael Polgrain give? He had nothing to say—absolutely nothing; he was miles away—I mean the man is mad. Who would listen to him?" Then he sank into his chair again, with a blank smile on his lips. "A glass of water," he said to the servant, faintly. He drank it eagerly, then set the glass down with a trembling hand. "My dear Agatha," he continued, "you have no idea how these late hours disagree with me. I feel quite ill to-day."

His daughter was leaning over him, and her lips touched his brow as he spoke.

"Go into the library and lie down a while on the sofa, dear father," she said, anxiously. "I see you are feverish and weary. Come, will you take my arm?"

Maurice sprang to the door and opened it for father and daughter to pass out. But here Mr. Lanyon stopped a moment.

"What do you say to being my escort, Mr. Pellew?" he said. "If you will bear with an old man's tediousness, I shall be glad of your society in my retreat."

Maurice perceived at once that Mr. Lanyon wished now to give him the promised interview, so he acquiesced instantly; and after a slight demur on the part of Lady Crehylls, he prevailed on her to give up her charge to him.

A servant followed them to the library with wine and fruit, and Maurice felt an inexpressible relief when the glasses and plates were at last arranged, and the man closed the door, leaving him alone with Mr. Lanyon.

"You observed that my daughter's question respecting Michael Polgrain startled me," he remarked uneasily. "The truth is, I was just then thinking of a strange trial, which greatly affected my mind at the time of its occurrence."

"What has this to do with Madeline?" thought Maurice, with intense impatience. "Oh, why does he not come to the point?"

"I have an old newspaper here," continued Mr. Lanyon, "containing rather an exaggerated account of the affair, but nevertheless one true in the main. Would you like to look at it?"

As he spoke he took the paper from his pocket-book and handed it to Maurice. It was a number of the *Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, the oldest paper of the West, and the only one that circulated in Cornwall during the end of the last century. The small yellow sheet fluttered in Mr. Lanyon's hand as he pointed to the page which he wished Maurice to peruse.

"Are you anxious I should read this?" asked the young man. "If so, I will look at it by and bye in my room. At this present moment I want to speak to you of Madeline; and my mind is so full of doubt and pain, that until it is some-

what relieved, I fear I shall take very little interest even in the strangest trial ever recorded."

He stopped, surprised at the agitation which Mr. Lanyon could now no longer suppress.

"Read this first," he said hurriedly, "and then I will speak of Madeline. I have something to tell you concerning her—something serious ; but I cannot utter a word until you have read that trial."

With his eyes fixed earnestly on the white, haggard face before him, Maurice listened with a vague fear clutching at his heart, then he seized the paper, and read down the closely printed page in deep silence. Mr. Lanyon watched him eagerly, with the fever of some great pain bringing big drops of sweat upon his brow, yet, when Maurice had concluded, he avoided his gaze, and the young man's anxious eyes sought his in vain.

"Did you know this—this tenant of St. Eglon's Hut?" asked Maurice, as he folded the paper with an unsteady hand.

"Slightly," returned Mr. Lanyon ; "but there could be no friendship or even acquaintance between us. He was doubtless a gentleman by birth, but broken in fortune and in reputation, jaded in health, and dissipated and reckless in character. You have read his trial, and—and you think him guilty?"

"Yes," replied Maurice, in a slightly hesitating

tone ; "but had I been his counsel, I should have pleaded for time. The evidence is all circumstantial, and I would have asked that the prisoner should be allowed time to procure witnesses in his own favour."

"That is a circumstance, Mr. Pellew, which has always caused me keen regret," said Mr. Lanyon. "I would give all my fortune, and the small remnant of my life, if that unhappy man's trial had been postponed."

"Such a regret is very useless," observed Maurice, "especially as there appears to have been no doubt in the minds of judge and jury as to his guilt. I see he was condemned, and I suppose the sentence was carried out."

"No," said Mr. Lanyon, laying his hand on the young man's arm ; "he anticipated the sentence. He died by his own hand."

A swift, dark flush covered Maurice Pellew's face to the brow, and the dreadful doubt that had seized upon his heart now became a certainty.

"You give me this trial to read," he faltered, "because—— But no, no, it cannot be, it is too horrible !"

"Wait a moment before you judge, I entreat you," cried Mr. Lanyon. "Remember, Madeline is my daughter by adoption. The home, the education, the affection she has received, have not been influenced by the evils of her birth. She has ever been surrounded by all that is good

and true. Tell me, is she less pure, less noble than any other lady whom you have met in your own circle?"

Maurice had covered his face with his hands, but he raised his head now, saying earnestly—"No; on my life no; she is as noble and as pure as the best, and she is more intelligent, more thoughtful than most; yet there is a warp in her mind, which I can well understand now I have read this," and he laid his hand on the paper with a deep sigh.

"You grant her talents, worth, and beauty," resumed Mr. Lanyon, pleadingly, "and these are her own; do you think, for a sin not her own, she ought to suffer in your estimation?"

"There is no need to plead her cause to me," replied Maurice. "My heart speaks for her in a voice deeper than yours, but I confess it is at war with my reason, my prejudice, my prudence. It is terrible to have a secret in one's own household; terrible to look in the faces of one's children, and feel there is a horror hidden from them, the burden of which you have not courage to lay upon their hearts."

Mr. Lanyon's pale pinched face wore a deathly hue as Maurice finished, and, stretching out his shaking hand, he seized a glass of wine, which he drank eagerly.

"True, Maurice," he said, "and yet you see I have braved the trial. I have succoured Made-

line from the day she was left an orphan, and neither Geoffrey nor Agatha has an idea of her true parentage."

"Your kindness, your charity, your benevolence, will doubtless meet their due reward," replied Maurice, softly. "Such disinterested——"

"For pity's sake, be silent," cried Mr. Lanyon, hurriedly. "I detest a single word of praise on this matter. Tell me at once, is your heart turned from Madeline now that you have read this history?"

"No," answered Maurice, sadly, "the love of years cannot be quenched in a moment, even by such a flood of sorrow and sin as this. But I think Madeline spoke truly, and acted nobly, and like herself, when she said this morning she could never be my wife."

"Are you so poor in heart?" asked Mr. Lanyon, a little scornfully. "Then I am sorry I have divulged poor Madeline's history. I thought you loved her."

Maurice rose, and paced the room once or twice before he answered, and he was still standing, when he said, in a low, quiet voice,—“Mr. Lanyon, my heart is not so poor as you think, but the question it has to resolve is so momentous, that it will not decide hastily.”

"What question do you mean?" asked Mr. Lanyon, in a feeble, querulous tone.

"I am asking myself," said Maurice, "whether

I have a right, for my love's sake, to give up all my hopes of a noble career, all my ambition and prospects. I am asking myself, whether I have a right to disappoint my father's just expectations, and destroy all the long-cherished hopes which his affection and his care have built around me."

"Is there any need to destroy them?" cried Mr. Lanyon. "Madeline is a woman fit to stand by her husband's side, if he wins the highest honours in the land."

"In herself she is," returned Maurice, sorrowfully; "but yet, whosoever marries her must be content to remain an obscure man; he must shrink from the public gaze, and live unknowing and unknown."

Mr. Lanyon was silent, and Maurice went on more sadly still.

"You are aware," he said, "that to be known is the breath of a barrister's life. To bring him self ever and always into the public arena, till he is crowned victor in the fight, is his great hope; and for him who has whetted the edge of his mind for the encounter it is a glorious struggle. Mr. Lanyon, I have done this. The education I have received, the honours I have won at Oxford, the talents I possess, I have only valued as the weapons I should use in this battle. It is no light thing, then, to fling my arms down, and retire from the field, before I have drawn a

sword ; it is no light thing to renounce all hope of wealth and position, and to tell my heart that it must rest content with obscurity and poverty ; yet I could do all this for Madeline's sake, if——”

He paused, unwilling to conclude ; and Mr. Lanyon filled up the silence with a long-drawn sigh.

“ If you were assured of Madeline's affection, you would say, Maurice ! Then take the assurance from my lips. In this room to-day she told me all her heart, and confessed that her entire love was yours.”

A flush of transient joy crimsoned Maurice Pellew's face a moment, then faded, leaving it paler than before.

“ Nevertheless,” he said mournfully, “ she saw the necessity of sacrificing her love, she saw that we must part. Her rejection of me this morning was noble, like herself ; and loving her most dearly, as I do, I still bow to her decision.”

Mr. Lanyon seemed to gasp for breath, his agitation grew beyond his control, and shone out now in every lineament of his careworn face. When he spoke his voice had sunk to a whisper.

“ So you reject her utterly,” he said ; “ acknowledging her to be good and gifted, you desert her—you visit upon her innocent head the sins of her father,—a man she can scarce remember. For the mere accident of birth you permit your prejudices to destroy your love.

What is your boast worth, then, that you could be content with obscurity for her sake?"

"I added an 'if,'" said Maurice, with deep sadness. "I was about to say, if her name was pure from the stain of so dreadful a guilt. I confess to a sort of horror in my blood, which, unjust or not, makes me shudder at the thought of giving to my children a lineage which, on their mother's side, would be a terror to me and them. How can I tell how my mind would dwell on this crime?—how, in years to come, I might watch in my wife, or my child, for some outbreak of the father's temper, which might seem to me the germ springing up to death? Why, every little venial, childish sin I saw in my home, would pull at my heartstrings and make them crack. No, I could not bear it—I tell you, I could not bear it."

He finished vehemently, too agitated himself to mark that his words had brought great beads of sweat on Mr. Lanyon's brow, and driven the blood from his face, leaving the care-lined lips colourless and quivering with some strange agony.

"Maurice," he said, extending his hand towards him feebly, "do you mean that if Madeline's father were guiltless you would not heed the verdict of a jury, or the sentence of a judge, or the prejudices of the world, but would take his daughter gladly?"

“ I mean that,” said Maurice stedfastly. “ I repeat it, my love is not so poor as you think. I would take Madeline to my heart to-morrow if I could even doubt her father’s guilt. Yes, the mere doubt would satisfy me, and take the creeping horror out of my veins.”

Who can say through what a fiery furnace of pain, Mr. Lanyon’s spirit passed as he heard this avowal ? The fate of a human soul, of Madeline Sylvester’s soul, hung upon his lips ; her destiny for good or evil was in his hands ; he held the balance ; he could make her life safe, pure, and happy by a single word ; or by his silence he could leave her to the solitude of her proud misery, and let her perish. It was a terrible moment—a moment of agony and indecision ; it was awful to hold thus within his power the whole future of a human being. Passing before him as in a glass, he saw Madeline as a wife and mother, with all good thoughts, gentle and womanly, springing up in the pure soil of home, making her soul, like a watered garden, beautiful for flower and for fruit. Following this vision, came the figure of a woman to whom was denied all the blessings of love and home,—a woman erect in pride, but bowed in the spirit beneath a burden of shame, her heart scarred as with fire, and her soul a wilderness, on whose parched sands the rain never fell, though the dwellers of the desert, the scorpion and the serpent, found

here food and shelter. The picture was horrible, and its truth passed over him like a withering breath. Justice and Heaven cried out to him, as he saw it, to speak and save her; and, above all, knocking at his breast loudly, came that small, steadfast, whispering voice in the human heart, which demands that atonement shall be made for wrong.

“Maurice,” he said nervously, “there are circumstances connected with this dire event, which, if I had known them in time——”

“Father,” interposed a very sweet voice, “I have brought you a cup of tea myself. Are you better?”

Radiant in her grace and beauty, Lady Crehylls laid her small hand softly upon his, and smiled into his eyes in a pretty, childish, coaxing way, peculiar to her. Her little boy was with her, holding the folds of her blue silk dress in both his chubby hands, and hiding his face half shyly, half in fun, as Maurice patted his yellow curls.

The presence of his daughter, and her child brought a sudden revulsion of feeling to Mr. Lanyon’s heart. What was Madeline to him, compared with these? And who was Maurice Pellew, that he should put the happiness of those dear lives into his keeping? Experience and sorrow had taught him to put faith in no man. Maurice might promise secrecy; but what is a

promise but idle breath ? And a secret is only safe when held within one's own lips ; to entrust it to another is to send it forth to the four winds ; and if this secret went out to the world, what a crash of ruin would follow, what dire dismay and anguish would fall down upon this happy home, what unutterable woe would swallow up all this peace !

"Agatha," said Mr. Lanyon, and his voice shook, "I am glad you came, my dear—very glad."

"And me, too ?" asked the child. "Is g'anpa' glad Aubrey came too ?"

Mr. Lanyon took the little one in his arms and kissed him.

"Glad !" said he—"yes, grandpapa is always glad to see his dear boy."

With hands trembling like winter leaves, the old man set the child upon his knee.

"Grandpapa will keep Aubrey safe," he murmured.

"Safe !" returned the boy. "No one can hurt Aubrey. Giants can't come to this castle. When I'm bigger, I'll have a sword, and fight giants."

The grave man smiled, and the young mother laughed joyously.

"And I'll kill all the ogres," cried the child, clapping his little hands together—"the wicked ogres who steal away children."

"May I ask if Miss Sylvester is better?" said Maurice, suddenly.

"Oh, Mr. Pellew, I am really ashamed of myself," said Lady Crehylls, blushing a vivid rose; "I ought to have gone up to her room, to see how she is. I'll go at once. Come, Aubrey; wish grandpapa good night now, and then we'll go."

"Where is Geoffrey?" asked Mr. Lanyon.

"Oh, he is gone for a stroll in the park, the evening is so lovely," replied Lady Crehylls. "Father, do you know he has asked for Madeline so many times this evening, that I am quite jealous. What do you think of that?"

She did not wait for an answer, but ran away, laughing and singing to her boy as she went. Her joyous presence, her air and tone had jarred upon the time, in the mind of Maurice, and the moment she was gone, he turned to Mr. Lanyon, and entreated him to conclude what he was about to say. Alas! he little guessed that her fresh fair face, and the child's innocent prattle, had sealed Mr. Lanyon's lips, and changed Madeline's and his own fate for ever in this world.

"The circumstance was, perhaps, immaterial," observed Mr. Lanyon, looking down into his tea-cup; "but I will relate it, since I have alluded to it. I must tell you the story from the beginning, clearly, for the garbled account in the paper will scarcely enable you else to understand me.

“In my capacity as trustee for the Crehylls estates, I was applied to by this—this ruined gentleman, to let him St. Eglon’s Hut. Unhappily, in my anxiety to do the best I could for the property under my charge, I consented, and the man and his wife came down here and took possession of the place. Maurice, this wife of his was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. At all times, in all countries, she would have drawn a crowd of gazers; down here she was simply a wonder. No one could see her without a start of admiration and surprise; no one, having once looked upon her face, could ever forget it again while he lived. The marvellous beauty of the lady, and the reckless dissipation of her husband, became common talk. Every one knew they lived unhappy lives; every one knew the man was passionate and jealous, the woman sullen and bitter. Suddenly a friend came to stay with them—the same who was found dead by the river side.

“At the ford, where the cross is cut on the bank?” said Maurice, taking up the paper, and putting it down again, wearily.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Lanyon; “and this visitor, this false friend, had not been long at St. Eglon’s Hut before people said, the wretched spendthrift husband had good cause for jealousy, for he was certainly the secret lover of the beautiful wife. About this time it came to my knowledge

that Lord Crehylls—a boy then—was attracted by the wonderful loveliness of this woman, and was following her in her walks, and endeavouring, by other foolish boyish ways, to evince his admiration. Alarmed by this, I sent the lad away on a cruise. I had interest enough to get him on board the admiral's ship, in the fleet then at Plymouth, and he left the country, and was absent three years."

"Did you think the affair so serious between him and the lady?" asked Maurice.

"By no means," said Mr. Lanyon, lifting his trembling hand to his forehead, and pressing it there a moment; but I was the lad's guardian, and resolved, therefore, to save him from evil. I feared the violence and jealousy of a man whose wits were always half-maddened by drink; so I thought it best to get Geoffrey out of the way of such a husband and such a wife. Scarcely was he safely embarked, when I heard, with dismay, that the wretched woman and her lover had left St. Eglon's Hut, and the forsaken husband was there alone, brooding over his misery. A few days passed, and the body of the lover was washed up by the brook upon the bank. There was no doubt that he was murdered. Then followed all the evidence you have read there—the fearful quarrel overheard by the servants, and the testimony of the thatcher on the roof of that little cottage beyond the wood, who saw both men

enter the wood, but only one return—the one who threw his blood-stained coat down the old shaft, which lies among the moor-stones. Hidden by the chimney of the cottage, the roof of which he was repairing, the thatcher saw this deed plainly, and wondered at it. This was the act which, in the eyes of judge and jury, condemned the unhappy father of Madeline Sylvester.”

Mr. Lanyon paused, and Maurice looked at him with a disappointed gaze.

“Are these the only circumstances you had to relate to me?” he said. “They are much the same as the paper tells; and I see nothing in them from which to derive a doubt of this wretched gentleman’s guilt. He had been wronged, fearfully wronged; and, in a moment of madness, he slew the villain who had betrayed his friendship and dishonoured his name. In most countries such a sudden revenge on the part of a husband would scarcely be called murder. There is a chord of sympathy in the heart of every man which half excuses the deed. Perhaps this is the extenuating circumstance to which you allude?”

“No,” returned Mr. Lanyon. “See here, have you observed this?” And taking up the paper, he pointed, with a shaking finger, to the evidence of the thatcher. “Do you remark that a third man is seen to enter the wood—enters it first, before Mathew Carbis, the wife’s lover—

plunges into it gloomily, followed by the husband. And this man has never been seen again from that day to this," said Mr. Lanyon, slowly.

Maurice gazed at him with earnest eyes, while, with trembling forefinger still upon the paper, Mr. Lanyon went on.

"The disappearance of this man," he said—"one of those hawkers who ruin the Cornish poor—was not thought much of at the time; but since he has never ventured into this county again—since from that hour he has vanished from human ken as completely as though he were a dead man—I verily believe the statement of this unhappy, ruined, reckless gentleman—that he found Mathew Carbis dead by the brook side, and lifting him, to see if he could give him aid, his light great-coat became stained with blood. Then, when he saw the man was murdered, it flashed into his mind that of all men living, he would be the one, whom the world would deem most desirous of Mathew Carbis's death. Trembling at the thought, he flung the body into the stream, and threw his coat into the depths of the old shaft, and returning to his desolate home, he held his peace. Remember, Maurice, he was a man habitually given to intoxication—not a man likely to act with cool sense, and judgment on any matter—and now he was half crazed by his wife's flight. Hence, I repeat, that his defence,

which I deemed incredible at the time, I now believe; and it is my firm conviction, that he was not the slayer of Mathew Carbis."

It was not the words alone which swelled in clear tones from Mr. Lanyon's lips, but the look of conviction, painful conviction, on his haggard features which impressed and agitated Maurice Pellew in a singular way. The expression he used, the faith he asserted, seemed to spring from something stronger than a mere possibility; it was a belief so fixed and settled, that its root appeared to stand in fact, not in faith.

"You appear sure of what you say," observed Maurice; "and yet, what motive of hate or of revenge could this poor hawker have had against this vile man? Was there any search made for him?"

Mr. Lanyon grasped Maurice's hand in both his as he replied, "A very slight, a very ineffective search was made; and this is the circumstance that grieves me, and preys on my mind to this day. Disbelieving, then, entirely, the story told by the prisoner, I impressed my opinion on others. The trial was hurried on; all demands for a postponement were, through my influence, refused; and the result was, as you have read—death."

"And why were you so over-zealous in the cause of justice?" asked Maurice.

"It was not I only," returned Mr. Lanyon.

“The feeling of the whole country-side was against the man. He was essentially bad, drunken, and dissolute. Every mind was ready to believe the worst of him. No eye pitied or spared him. The common sympathy was with his wife.”

“And where is she now?” asked Maurice, faintly.

“She has never been seen, or heard of since the day of the murder,” replied Mr. Lanyon. “She told her servant, Michael Polgrain’s sister, that she was going to America, to join a brother she had there. Whether she spoke truly or not, no one can say; but it is certain that, when she quitted St. Eglon’s Hut, she did not know that her lover lay dead in the wood. Perhaps she meant to join him. But it is useless to conjecture concerning her fate; the wildest surmises were made at the time; the woods and the dismal shafts that lie round about were searched for her body, but all in vain. Neither living nor dead has the beautiful Mrs. Sherborne been ever seen again.”

“This is a mystery which greatly complicates the affair,” said Maurice, reflectively; “yet I cannot see in it any grounds, for your judging the man innocent. It would rather lead to the inference, that in a jealous fury, he slew both wife and paramour, and succeeded effectually in disposing of her while he failed with the other.”

"You have hit upon the common belief," said Mr. Lanyon; "you have touched the sword which slew that man. And yet I am strongly impressed with the idea, that we were all wrong, and his own version of the story was correct."

"Are you telling me all the facts on which you ground that belief?" asked Maurice.

Mr. Lanyon's worn face flushed painfully, and he replied, "I believe so, except that to the last moment of his life he asserted, that his hand had never slain Mathew Carbis. And as time has sped onwards, mellowing the prejudices and hatreds of that dreadful day, and above all, as years have passed by, and never brought again to the scene of the murder that man who glided like a shadow through the wood, I tremble to think that with him may lie the guilt, and that Walter Sherborne was condemned wrongfully."

The accents of conviction in which Mr. Lanyon spoke, the painful quiver in his voice, the agony on his face, all struck Maurice far more than the words themselves. He took up the paper again, and read the account of the trial all through. It was not a full and graphic report, such as would be printed now in a daily journal, but still there was enough of the evidence given to enable a man of acute mind to come to a tolerably just conclusion.

"Excuse me," said Maurice, looking up from

the paper suddenly ; “ but may I ask your secret motive for hurrying this trial ? ”

Mr. Lanyon came forward and laid both his hands upon the table, as though to steady his trembling frame. His face shone ghastly white in the twilight.

“ As I trust to be forgiven,” he said, earnestly, “ my motive was pure. Never doubting the man’s guilt, I wished to spare Geoffrey the misery of seeing him—the misery of hearing all the dreadful details of the murder, and all the fearful surmises concerning Mrs. Sherborne. He was a sensitive lad, one whose mind could be easily weakened by grief ; he had felt a boyish admiration for this woman—an admiration as pure and chivalric as it was romantic and foolish ; and I knew her doubtful fate would cause him the keenest distress, and lead him perhaps into some frantic or Quixotic acts. Therefore I concealed the whole story from him, and hoped it would fade away in a few months, before he returned home.”

“ But he did not come back for three years ? ” persisted Maurice.

“ I did not know his absence would be prolonged to that time,” resumed Mr. Lanyon. “ I had only sent him, as I thought, on a short cruise. I expected him to return at Christmas. When I heard that he had resolved on going on to the Indies, Walter Sherborne was already dead.”

With his eyes still bent on the paper, Maurice remained some moments in deep thought, uttering not a word. When he raised his head, his face was faintly flushed, but its expression was clear, bright, and earnest.

"Mr. Lanyon," he said, "I have followed this evidence, link by link; I have listened to your words, and I believe this hawker—the man who anticipated the steps of Mathew Carbis into the wood, and has since then disappeared from all human ken—is either the actual murderer, or his accomplice. I have come to this conclusion as a barrister, as one accustomed to sift evidence. It is enough: I doubt the guilt of Mr. Sherborne. I will take his daughter Madeline, whom you have called Sylvester, to be my wife, if she will accept me."

The two men grasped hands fervently: an inexpressible load seemed lifted from Mr. Lanyon's heart.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured, audibly. "Madeline shall not come to you without fortune, Maurice," he said.

"I am no romantic simpleton, to say no to that," returned the other. "Give her what you like; it shall of course be her own. I shall not touch it. Let me say one thing more, and then we will lay this dreadful subject at rest for ever. It is my firm intention quietly to trace this hawker, and find him if he is in the land of the living."

Was it the growing darkness, or a deep shadow of fear, which crept over Mr. Lanyon's face?

"You do not, I hope, think it wise to speak of this to Madeline?" he said.

"No, certainly not," replied Maurice. "It would be cruel to raise in her mind the fevered and uncertain hope of clearing her father's memory. If ever I see cause to think this may be done—if ever in my hand I hold a clue to the truth, I will speak to her, but not till then. Meanwhile, I will tell her that, knowing all her history, my love withstands the shock, and awaits her acceptance if she will take it."

"May Heaven bless you in it, Maurice!" returned Mr. Lanyon. And so this long conference ended.

CHAPTER VIII.

ITTLE dreaming of the discussion that had settled her fate, Madeline rose in the morning, heavy-hearted, and went to St. Eglon's Hut, to the promised meeting with Michael Polgrain. She walked swiftly yet dreamily, her thoughts more with her living lover than her dead father. Yet a message from the dead has in it something so inexpressibly awful and touching, that ever and anon as the girl's measured and graceful tread brought her deeper into the wood, among leaves and shadows, there grew about her thoughts a chill fear and a gloomy anticipation of coming sorrow.

“What message could he send to me save one of anguish?” she said to herself. “Perhaps he asks forgiveness of the child he has beggared, the child whom his deeds have so utterly ruined that her very identity is hidden behind a false name, and every hope she had on earth she has crushed out of her heart with her own hands. Yes, and better do that than drag a good man down to the level of her misery. Love and happiness are

meant for such women as Agatha Crehylls ; they do not fall to the lot of the orphan and the out-cast. I have never whispered deceitfully to my own soul that such things could be mine. No ; in whatever shape they came to me, I should know them for a delusion, and answer ; these are not for me ; take them out of my sight ; they madden me."

Then followed other thoughts more bitter still, in which Madeline compared her own lot with that of Agatha Crehylls, crying out it was unjust this spoiled child of fortune should have all the sunshine, while to her was given only pain and darkness. Thus she built up in her heart a dull smouldering fire of resentment against Lady Crehylls, which one single touch might kindle into the flame of active hatred. The sight of her sunny joyousness, and the love and tenderness constantly lavished on her, and the honour and respect ever round her, had often been as gall to Madeline's moody spirit. Moreover, as a child, she had seen with gloomy eyes that no effort of hers would win love from Mr. Lanyon, while Agatha, without an effort, gained ever his ready smiles and kisses. She saw it often with a bursting heart, and crushing her tears and complaints into silence, she nursed her jealousy in proud bitterness. Madeline was not a woman to forget anything ; this childish jealousy rankled in her soul still, only the shape it now took bore

with it a fiercer and more cruel sense of wrong. It was all injustice—all; and life with some was a burden of misery, from birth even to the grave. One man lives in the ease of wealth, and his bones are full of marrow and fatness, and another eateth his bread in bitterness all the days of his life, having never known joy.

Madeline did not pursue the thought further; she was close on St. Eglon's hut now, and flinging up her veil, she gazed on the empty and desolate windows with shrinking eyes. She could fix on the one from which her childish face had often looked out wistfully, longing for the cheerfulness and companions which other children had, but which never came to her. She could remember watching from the balcony her father's boat, a tiny speck on the sea, when he went away gloomily to fish alone. And dimly there came back to her memory, the relief on her mother's face when he departed; dimly too came the fierce words and quarrels on his return, and the stealthy figure of Mathew Carbis, as smiling he looked at both. Then as the faint image of the man flashed upon her mind, Madeline shuddered, and lifted her hand to her brow to drive the thought away. But it came again and again, always bringing Mathew Carbis with silent step and sinister smile, though every lineament of the face was lost to her recollection, and even the figure itself was but a shadow. Yet dim, shadowy as this stealthy

image might be, it ever brought with it a suffocating sense of horror, and of hatred towards the man, and a feeling of relief to think that he was dead.

“It was no murder to kill such a reptile!” she said to herself, fiercely.

With this thought there grew upon her memory the beautiful face of her mother, bowed down upon her white hands, weeping grievously. An unwonted weakness and tenderness filled Madeline’s heart, and she lifted up her arms to the sky longingly.

“Oh that I could find her!” she whispered, and her lips quivered with the unspoken words. “Oh that this sky which saw her depart, these silent trees, this great dumb sea, would speak, and tell me whether she went in innocence or in guilt, whether she kissed me in my sleep before she stole away; and whether, if she be living now, her heart ever yearns towards the child she deserted.”

Madeline turned her face towards the sea, and shading her face with her hand, she looked out over the far waters, as though asking of them the secret of her mother’s unknown fate. But she saw only the heaving waves, while there fell down upon her spirit a sense of darkness unfathomable in its gloom, dreadful in its pain.

“It is strange,” she said, with a deep shudder; “but this horror falls upon me always, when

I strive to penetrate the mystery of my mother's loss."

She shook off the gloomy fancy, and looked up, to see Michael Polgrain standing before her. The grey, leaden hue of his face, and the blue line of his firm closed lips seemed ghastlier to-day, and she shrank back, appalled by an appearance which seemed to indicate the last stage of some deadly disease.

"You look very ill," she said, kindly. "Is there nothing they can do for you at the Castle?"

"If I were weak and ready to fall as a dying leaf, Miss, I should never take help from the Castle," returned Michael; "but I want no help—I am quite well. I have had this ugly look upon my face a long, long while. Will you come in, Miss? I have laid a fire in the parlour, because the day is chill, and without a cheerful blaze, St. Eglon's Hut is but a whisht place."

Madeline followed his steps into the house, and entered a low square room having two windows, one towards the sea, and the other looking up the green glen. Both casements shook and rattled with every gust of wind, and the walls and ceiling were stained with damp and mildew. The old-fashioned stiff furniture, the cracked oval mirror above the mantelpiece, the decaying prints which hung forlornly on the walls, and the time-

worn paper, depicting the same landscape, the same sheep, the same shepherdesses, and the same boy swinging on a gate, with a church steeple close upon his nose, all following each other in an impossible and maddening manner—the fields, the gate, the sheep, and the steeple, standing on the sky of the same landscape immediately below it;—all this Madeline noted, and shuddered at. For piece by piece, each hideous adornment in the dismal room seemed to loom out of her inner consciousness, making for itself a second vision on her brain, vivid as the ugly reality now before her. This was the room she had seen so often in her dreams at school, only then, seated at the window looking seawards, was the pale beautiful figure of her mother, with listless hands lying idle in her lap, and great weary eyes fixed steadfastly upon the endless waters. In her childish sleep, when she saw this figure, she had stretched her arms longingly towards it, and awoke with a low cry, to weep bitterly in silence; but now, as the faint shadow seemed to flit by her, and take up its old attitude of despair and weariness, she turned away in scorn, saying to herself “Beautiful traitress, false as a wife, false as a mother, it is long since your haunting ghost has won a tear from the child you abandoned. You cannot move me now; the misery your cruel deed left with me has grown too hard for pity.”

“Miss Madeline,” said Michael, breaking in

upon her reverie with words sympathetic to her own thought, "I have seen your mother here in this room many a time. Your face is not like hers, miss; you will bear trouble, I think, with a braver spirit than she could."

"I am glad I bear no resemblance to her," said Madeline, coldly. "I would dash my face to pieces against a rock if it was like hers. I am come to hear something of my father, not of the woman who forsook him."

Michael Polgrain looked earnestly into her eyes as she spoke, and his own drooped sadly, while a painful and perplexed expression shadowed his gray face.

"I have tried to do right," he said, nervously. "I hope I'm doing right now. You know, miss, we can't raise the dead; if wrong has been done to them, it must rest a wrong for ever. But we must think of the living; we mustn't wrong them."

"To what do you allude?" asked Madeline, impatiently. "I cannot understand your meaning."

"I mean, miss, that it might happen to me, or to you, or to any one, to do a wrong thing in ignorance, not wishing harm to a single human soul, and that would be forgiven us," replied Michael; "but if we did it wilfully, with a hard heart and a cruel hand, then the reckoning we should have to pay would be the loss of our own

peace for ever. I hope, Miss Madeline, you don't think ill of any one?"

"I hope not," said Madeline, gravely, because she saw the man's face was grave; but inwardly she deemed him slow-witted, or, as Maurice had said, half-crazed.

"And you think well of your friends, Miss Madeline?" said Michael.

"The few I have, certainly," she answered.

"His honour, Mr. Lanyon, has been like a father to you," continued Michael, with growing earnestness. "You would not grieve him, I reckon, for worlds?"

"Assuredly not," said Madeline, a little wearily. "I do not believe myself ungrateful."

"I am glad of that," resumed Michael, in a clearer voice. "Of course you are not ungrateful, miss. Brought up, as you have been, among the highest and the best in the land, and taught from the first to be good and true, I am sure no hard thought, no cruel thought, would ever come into your heart. I am foolish to let the doubt of them come to mine. But I am a poor man, miss, and no scholar. I can't even read and write. Book-learning, now, will have taught you kinder and better things than I shall ever know."

Madeline smiled half sadly at the simplicity of the man.

"Oh the weariness of books!" she said within herself. "And the old deceit takes in the world

still. Eve grasped at knowledge and found sin ; yet we still run after learning, and mistake it for virtue and peace."

"And so," continued Michael, "your life wont be a mistake like mine—a poor, blind mistake. You can hold a secret and do no sin ; you wont shut the sunshine out of your soul as I have done, and go through the world with all things gray and dark upon your path."

His solemn tone arrested Madeline's attention, and she fixed her eyes upon his face and saw its ashen hue, and the dead look in his dull eyes.

"I trust," she said, "your blindness will never fall upon me. Of what secret do you speak?"

"Did I say secret?" asked Michael, in a bewildered way. "Miss Madeline, you and my lord are good friends."

"Certainly," cried Madeline, impatiently.

"He must seem like a brother to you, miss," said Michael ; "and you love him, I reckon, just the same?"

"I like him very much," replied Madeline, gravely.

"And well you may, miss," said Michael. "He is the kindest, noblest gentleman that ever stepped, and the happiest—yes, I am thankful I can say it—the happiest. You wouldn't hurt a hair of his head, miss, I'm sure of that."

"No ; why should I hurt Lord Crehylls?" said Madeline. "He has always been kind to me."

"Like a brother?" continued Michael.

"Quite so," returned Madeline willingly.

"And my lady—she who was Miss Lanyon—is like a sister to you, miss?" he resumed.

Madeline answered unwillingly now.

"What can it matter to you, Michael," she said, "what my feelings towards Lady Crehylls may be!"

"The man turned his dull eyes towards her slowly, and peered forward as though longing to see more clearly.

"You look very dark to me, miss, and your answer is dark too," he said, "but you must speak plainly, miss, before I can say a word more."

"Very well," said Madeline, shrugging her shoulders slightly; "then I must say I consider Lady Crehylls a spoiled, petted child, who thinks every shadow should creep out of her path, and that all the sunshine in the sky was made for her alone."

Michael Polgrain listened more to the inflection of her voice than to her words, and this seemed to distress him.

"You do not like her," he said, in a low tone.

"My dislike will never hurt her," returned Madeline, with a slight laugh. "With all the world at her feet, it will scarcely matter that Madeline Sylvester is not among the worshippers."

The first part of this speech struck Michael's ear more than the last.

"Your dislike will never hurt her," he repeated quietly. "No, for her father and her husband's sake you would hold back your hand. Miss Madeline, do you know I saw your father die? And that is the last sight I ever beheld in sunshine," he added, sorrowfully. "Since then my face has always worn this look, and the world is all in shadow."

Madeline had risen, apparently calm and self-possessed; but her dark eyes shone with a glowing fire, and she pressed her teeth upon her lip to keep it still.

"You saw him die," she repeated, mournfully. "Well, and what was his message to me?"

"He said, 'When my daughter is eighteen, and old enough to understand my words, seek her out, and tell her from me that my hand never touched Mathew Carbis.'"

Madeline started violently, then her face grew like marble, hard and white.

"He spoke falsely, I suppose," she said, in a very low voice, which trembled in spite of all her courage. "Crime lies always."

"He spoke the truth," said Michael Polgrain.

He sat so still, he looked so like a dead man, as he uttered this, that Madeline's flesh quivered at him, but still she kept her calmness.

"How do you know that he spoke truly?" she said, in a clear, sharp tone.

Michael Polgrain lifted his dull eyes to her face,

then dropped them, with an air of deep dejection.

"A man's knowledge comes to him many ways," he replied, "and it isn't likely he can always tell how he knows a thing. But this I will say,—the man Mathew Carbis deserved his death. No meaner reptile ever crawled than he."

Perceiving, from this assertion, that Michael, with his wild, untutored notions of justice, sympathized with a deed which punished a traitor, and thinking that his belief in her father's innocence meant only that he considered him justified, Madeline, with a deep sigh, stopped the further questions which rose to her lips. It was so utterly improbable, too, that this half-crazed man should know more of this sad history, than she had already learned herself from other and better sources, that the very idea of seeking information from him seemed to her a folly.

"I am thankful to receive my father's message," she said, calmly. "Can I repay you in any way for remembering it, and giving it to me at last?"

"No, Miss Madeline, you owe me nothing for that," returned Michael. "And the message is not all I have to give you."

Madeline looked up eagerly, and met Michael's earnest and agitated gaze. His face was full of doubt and sorrow; it was evident that every word he spoke was drawn from him reluctantly, and

would never be uttered but for some strong fear or superstition, which urged him to fulfil a promise made to the dead.

"You have said you don't wish them any harm," he murmured, almost unintelligibly; "and come what may of it, the lot is drawn: it fell to me, and I must bide the issue."

He took a very old leather purse from his pocket, and drew thence a small but heavy-looking key, which he placed in Madeline's hand.

"This is what your father gave me for you," he continued. "He said it opened his desk, and when you were eighteen you might unlock it, and read all it contained."

"His desk!" repeated Madeline, bewildered; "where is his desk?"

"Is it not in your possession?" asked Michael Polgrain.

"No, I have never seen it," cried Madeline.

Michael wiped his brow with his handkerchief, and peered, with slow, dull eyes, round the dismal room.

"I never mind seeing it stand here," he said, "but I saw it once in a little room upstairs."

"Let us look," said Madeline, instantly.

It was a gloomy search, and a vain one. The dismantled and dreary rooms wore for Madeline a look of unutterable woe. Childish recollections came crowding on her heavily, mingled with all the pain of the present time.

“ Oh that these walls had language !” she cried within herself. “ Oh that these deaf and dumb witnesses of my father’s and mother’s story could speak, and resolve my doubts !”

Following Michael Polgrain’s steps, she wandered from room to room, aiding him in the opening of empty presses and mouldy cupboards, and still they found nothing but damp or cobwebs. Only once the tears came into her eyes—it was when she stood by the side of the little cot, where she had slept when a child. Then she noted how near it was to her mother’s bed ; and as she looked upon the pillow, she thought of the beautiful, weary face that had lain there, perhaps sleepless and tearless, growing desperate in its woe.

Miss Madeline, your father’s desk is not here,” said Michael. “ Yet he must have made sure of your having it, or he would not have sent you the key.”

“ You say you saw it here,” observed Madeline. “ But when did you see it ?”

“ About a week before the death of Mathew Carbis,” he answered. “ Your father sat at this table writing. I was in the garden at work, and he called to me from the window to come up here to him. Then I saw the desk open before him.”

Madeline shaded her eyes with her hand, and gazed at Michael in dismay.

“ Are you the ruddy, happy-looking lad that

worked in our garden?" she cried. "I well remember that boy; but I should never have guessed that you were he."

"Yet I am the same, miss," said Michael, gloomily; and turning his face from her earnest look, he led the way downstairs again.

Every room now had been searched for the missing desk, and it was evident that it was not to be found here.

"Are you quite sure," said Madeline, "that everything was left at St. Eglon's Hut exactly as it was during the time it was tenanted?"

"I am quite sure," replied Michael; "I have heard Lord Crehylls say many a time, that not a single thing should be moved. I know he gave those orders to my sister; and I know she has obeyed them."

"But at first," said Madeline, conquering her repugnance to allude to that dreadful time, "at first, when my unhappy father was dragged away from this place, might not some one have taken the desk then? Surely the house was searched at that time; and of all things, the desk would be the first placed in the hands of a magistrate."

Michael started, and his long pale hands drooped forward as though he was about to fall.

"You are right," he said slowly; "for certain the Justice had it;—Mr. Lanyon, I mean; he was the only Justice here then."

An expression of relief came over Michael's

leaden face as he spoke, and he held himself upright again.

"If Mr. Lanyon has it," said Madeline, "the affair will be very simple ; I will ask him for it, and show him this key."

As she said this, Michael's colourless lips broke into a smile, and a look of satisfaction flashed for a moment into his dull eyes ; but in an instant this expression changed, and the ashen hue on his face took a deeper gray.

"When the lot is drawn we can't escape," he said, as if to himself. "What must be will be ; and whether it be good or bad the heart must bear it. If I break a promise to the dead he'll follow me, even on the sea. Miss Madeline, I have searched for that desk with an unwilling mind, and I was glad when I heard you say you'd ask Justice Lanyon for it, because I know'd then your eye would never see it, and your hand would never touch it. No, Miss Madeline, if you want truly to get it, say not a single word to Squire Lanyon, but search the old mansion of Penkivel from roof to cellar ; and when you find it, miss, then may your load be lighter than mine."

His voice ceased with a sudden sob, and he groped his way to the door with outspread hands, blindly.

"Stop !" cried Madeline ; "I have one word more to say. Apparently you were trusted by my father, and you visited him in prison. That

was kind. What I wish to say, is, that his child will never forget that, and she thanks you—thanks you with all her heart.”

She came towards him, and held out her hand, and her large steadfast eyes swam in unwonted moisture, but Michael Polgrain shrank away from her proffered clasp.

“Not to me, Miss Madeline,” he said, hurriedly. “Do not offer your hand to me! I dare not touch it; and I cannot take your thanks either. It was not kindness that led me to the prison.”

“So even this man will not take my hand!” thought Madeline, bitterly, as she let it fall by her side, and her face resumed its cold, proud look.

“Not for kindness,” she said. “Then why did you go to him?”

“I went to offer him his life,” replied Michael, simply. “I went bitterly against my will, and I went too late: he was dying!”

Madeline heard him with such amazement that her lips parted without words, and she stood for a moment breathless and silent.

“To offer him his life,” she repeated, slowly.

“Yes, simply that,” said Michael. “I would have changed clothes with him, and got him out of prison that way, or I would have taken his place, and said I had done the deed myself. Or, all this failing, I would have got a band of miners together, and broken through the bars.”

"You are utterly mad," cried Madeline. "Did you tell him you had come for such a wild purpose?"

"No, I found him dying; so I held my peace. It was of no use to speak then," said Michael, in his gloomiest tone. "He was always a hasty man; he should not have laid hands upon his own life. Why cannot his blood rest upon his own head?"

The sudden loudness of his voice, the haggard look on his gray cold face, and the startling thoughts in her own heart, kept Madeline for a moment too agitated to speak; then she cried, with sharp vehemence, "Michael Polgrain, you know something that you are holding back from me! What is this secret? If I ought to hear it, tell it at once."

"You will never hear it from me, Miss Madeline," he returned. "The curse I have borne so long I can suffer to the end. No, I shall never tell it, not even to see the sun again."

So saying, Michael Polgrain's groping hand found the lock of the door, and turned it, and he went away, with that gray, shadowy look upon his face to the last.

Madeline walked swiftly away to the Castle, with a new and passionate hope in her heart, which lent wings to her feet, and brought to her cheeks the glow of a sunny crimson.

CHAPTER IX.



WELL done, Pellew," cried Lord Crehylls, gaily ; " that was a splendid shot ! What a pity there is nothing better to kill this time of the year than young rooks."

" I am so sorry to have the rooks killed," said Lady Crehylls. " I wish both your guns would miss fire."

She was standing by her husband's side, and as he turned to answer her, he laid his hand fondly on her shoulder.

" My dear Agatha," he said, laughing, " if we did not thin them out sometimes, the whole black colony would desert us. There is nothing the rooks like better than being shot. I assure you they forsake the trees, unless there is a little killing done amongst them every summer. And fancy how queer and dismal it would be to have no rookery at Crehylls ! Blaze away, Pellew !"

But Mr. Pellew fired this time very much at random, and the scared bird flew away over his head with a loud cry.

"Missed, by Jupiter!" exclaimed his friend.
"Why, what are you about, Maurice?"

There was no reply to this, unless the sudden gleam of a bright-coloured dress between the distant trees was an answer.

"It is Madeline," said Lady Crehylls, smiling; "and how beautiful she looks! By the bye, Geoffrey, I am a little jealous. Why did you never tell me that when you were a boy, you were madly in love with your 'beautiful Madeline?'"

Lord Crehylls gazed at her in a way that looked almost terror-struck, and his face grew very pale.

"What are you talking of, Agatha?" he said, in a tone of forced quietness.

"Don't pretend not to understand me," said his wife, with a slight laugh. "You know well enough what I mean."

Lord Crehylls was paler still now, and he laid his gun upon the grass and then took it up again, like a man suddenly bewildered by an unexpected stroke.

"Agatha," he said, pleadingly, "if you only knew how you pain me by this allusion, you would, I am sure, never approach the subject again. Heaven and my own heart alone know how hard I have tried to blot it out of my life, and how much I would give to forget it entirely."

He spoke in a voice inaudible to Maurice, who was standing at some little distance, but whose ear, nevertheless, detected something strange in the dialogue. Lady Crehylls looked at her husband with a face full of consternation and grief.

"I had no idea," she said, "that your attachment was so serious. I have been foolish enough to think that I was your first love."

She tried to speak in an indifferent, even in a laughing tone; but her voice trembled in spite of the effort, and she walked away up the long avenue of elms just as Madeline entered it on the other side. In her surprise at her husband's grave speech, Lady Crehylls had forgotten that the Madeline of whom she was thinking was only a child at the period of her marriage, four years ago; her mind dwelt only on Lord Crehylls's seriousness and on the words of the letter in her father's desk. She felt there was a mystery in all this which she could not understand, and a sense of depression and loneliness took possession of her heart. She did not look back and see with what wistful eyes Lord Crehylls watched her depart; she fancied herself neglected, and walked on alone, a little coldly and proudly.

From what small beginnings will dissension and misunderstanding arise at times!

Lord Crehylls went on shooting rooks, for the

keepers stood by, and he scarcely liked to throw down his gun so soon, after having himself arranged the morning's sport. But Maurice Pellew gave his to a servant, and went to meet Madeline as she approached. This was not the first time they had met since her rejection of him; their mutual embarrassment was therefore somewhat less painful, and there was even a smile on Madeline's lips as she greeted him.

"Have you given up the work of slaughter for to-day?" she said. "If there is any pleasure in killing, pray go on with it, don't let me stop you."

"Will you stay here as a spectator of our prowess?" asked Maurice.

"No, indeed," she answered. "I would not mind if the birds were killed outright, but I hate to see them come fluttering and screaming to the ground. I am going for a walk. Good-bye."

But Maurice walked on by her side, never heeding the adieu she had dropped so carelessly. This was the fourth day since their walk to St. Eglon's Hut, and she had not asked him why he lingered at the Castle, neither had she, after that first evening, shunned him in any way. There was a change in her manner more palpable to the eye than the ear; it was not in her voice or in her words, but it rather showed itself in a

greater willingness to listen when he spoke, a greater willingness to accept the slight homage which he dared to pay her. It was as though, for the first time, she was yielding to her own heart the permission to love. This change was caused by her interview with Michael Polgrain : his words had sown in her spirit a fevered and dangerous hope, to which she clung with all that tenacity of purpose peculiar to her character. If her father was a martyr to circumstances, or the victim of treachery, she was free to love ; she could with an unsullied conscience take that cup of happiness which she had, but a few days before, set aside with a resolute hand. As the current of her thoughts ran thus, her eyes grew brighter, her cheeks glowed, her lips broke often into smiles, and over all her aspect there quivered a hope like sunlight, which made her indescribably beautiful. The task set before her seemed in her eyes glorious and noble. To reclothe a father's memory with innocence and honour,—such a duty was worth living for, worth dying for. And already she looked forward to the time when she might proclaim her name aloud to the whole world, and say even proudly, “ I am Madeline Sherborne, the child of that wronged man, whom a blind and vindictive world condemned to die by the hand of a false justice.”

Thus she dreamed in her sanguine moments ; but between these came times of great depression,

when the difficulties in her way loomed darkly on her, when the thoughts of her inexperience and her youth paralysed every faculty, and the memory of the long, long years she had lived beneath the shadow of one dreadful deed, flung her into despair. But this was not her mood now, as she walked along by the side of Maurice Pellew, listening as he talked.

"Madeline," he said, suddenly, "I am going to give up studying for the Bar."

She lifted her eyes and looked him earnestly in the face.

"Not on my account, I hope?" she said hurriedly; "not because I answered you as I did three days ago?"

"I give up the Bar, not in disappointment, but in hope," replied Maurice, softly.

"In hope?" echoed Madeline.

"Yes," said he; "in the hope that you will not despise an unambitious man, whose mind is bent on leading a quiet life,—not useless, I trust, but utterly beyond the pale of fame or the round of fashion."

"Are you in earnest?" said Madeline, sadly.

"I was never more in earnest than I am now," he answered.

"But are you justified in renouncing a career so fitted to your abilities—a career on which you had fixed so many hopes?" she asked.

"I have fixed a better and a purer hope on

my new career," he replied, in a clear voice. "Tell me only that you do not despise my want of ambition."

"I do not despise it," returned Madeline, with a half sigh, "and yet I am disappointed too. I thought to live to see you win high honours. What is this new hope on which you have fixed your heart?"

"It is both new and old," he replied. "Oh, Madeline," he cried, "cannot you guess it? It is the one great hope of my life ever since boyhood."

Madeline was very pale. The cup of happiness for which she longed was again at her lips. Might she drink? might she accept the love of this good and honourable man, and yet not drag him into misery? While she hesitated, with eyes bent down and blood rushing swiftly to her heart, Maurice spoke again.

"Do not answer me, Madeline, till I have told you all," he said. "Three days ago there fell into my hands an old journal. In it I read the report of a trial,—the trial of a gentleman once the tenant of St. Eglon's Hut. Madeline, I have doubts in my mind of that man's guilt. More, I have even a deep conviction, that he was innocent of the crime of which he was accused. But whether he were innocent or guilty, my love for his daughter withstands the shock of knowing her allied to him. I love her for herself. No

adventitious circumstances of rank, position, or name could either weaken or strengthen that love. Madeline, I am not a time-server; I am not fashion's fool. I can surely live a good and useful life, without seeking the gawds which success brings to a man. My love, my dear love, will you share that tranquil life with me?—will you take the heart which I give as willingly to Madeline Sherborne as to Madeline Sylvester?"

She did not answer him, but his arm was round her, and his kiss fell upon her lips.

"Is this true?" she murmured. "Can you really love me like this, and forsake the world, and all your ambitious hopes?"

"Madeline," said Maurice, earnestly, "there are surely better and higher hopes than those which spring from ambition; and these can be yours and mine, if we will. I have been ambitious for your sake; I can renounce ambition for your sake. Tell me, are you content?"

Madeline said "yes" with her lips, but there was a sting in her heart which made it but a faint affirmative. It was hard to think that the man she loved felt, in taking her, that henceforth he must hide from the world, and rest satisfied with obscurity. Her proud nature rebelled against the thought that, notwithstanding how great his love might be, there remained a settled conviction in his mind, that the daughter of Walter Sherborne was scarcely a fitting wife for a man

who sought to make his career a public one. But for the great hope which Michael Polgrain had put into her soul, she could not have borne this, and she would have rejected his love a second time as resolutely as she had rejected it at the first. It was this hope which made her now accept it, but with the inward resolve to give Maurice back his troth, if time should prove the hope groundless. Thus there was still an uncertainty in her tone, a reserve in her manner, which struck Maurice painfully. In his mind there remained no lingering doubts, and fears to hold back the full tide of his love. Having once come to a decision, having once told himself that he deliberately chose Madeline from out the world, in despite of circumstances and of sorrow, there rested in him no shadow of wavering, and no suspicion of wavering on her part entered into his imagination. Her acceptance, he believed, followed naturally when she knew that his love, like an ark, surmounted the flood of terror beneath which her history was hidden. Consideration for him had caused her to reject his love, but he did not think that consideration for herself might one day cause her to reject it again.

Madeline had a calm voice—a wonderfully calm, patient voice—telling to an acute ear a long history of suppressed suffering, pride, and resolution. When she broke the silence now,

there was a ring in this low, quiet voice, which spoke of a woe deeper still—a flood for human line too fearfully profound.

“Maurice,” she said, and in her passionless calm, she did not move her cheek from the lips pressed against it, “it is not to me that discontent will come in the future, but to you. I feel you have not counted the cost of what you do. Can you sit idle while others run the race and win the crown?”

“You will be my crown,” said Maurice, and his arm pressed her tightly.

With a pang at her heart which made her lip quiver, Madeline drew back from his embrace. She was no Cleopatra to love an indolent Anthony—her soul was always with Cæsar; and at this moment, when Maurice offered to give up the world for her sake, he appeared smaller in her eyes than she would have believed possible a few hours ago. Madeline’s was a spirit which craved for worldly honours and worldly respect, and in loving Maurice she had consciously worshipped a kindred spirit. She recognised in him a passionate ambition, and a steady determination to win success, which were the exact qualities she admired. Stripped of these, she felt her lover grow insignificant, and lose the glory with which her imagination had invested him. And would not the result be the same with him? In a few years’ time, how deep, how bitter would

be his regret that he had given up his brilliant career for a woman !

"I will never accept such a sacrifice," she said, resolutely. "I will never make you pay such a price for me as the renunciation of all your hopes."

"Not all, Madeline," returned Maurice. "I have a thousand ambitions yet left me, which you can share."

"I will not believe you," she answered. "Sit here with me, upon this knoll, and I will tell you all my heart."

"Do I not know your heart yet?" said Maurice, a little wistfully.

"No," she replied, "because you have only just heard my history ; and until you knew that, I was a sealed book to you. Maurice," she said, and she laid her hand in his, "how can I ever tell you how glad I am that this veil of mystery and of falsehood which stood between us is torn down ? It is not my fault that the truth was not frankly told you long ago ; it was by Mr. Lanyon's wish, even command, that I have been silent. I have always hated the concealment and deceptions by which I was walled in, and shut up in loneliness. And it has hurt me, this solitude, filled with the air of a prison, and the horror of crime. I am not so good as I might be."

Here she leaned her cheek upon her hand,

and the shadow of unshed tears sprang into her eyes.

"My dear Madeline," began Maurice.

"No, no, don't flatter me," she cried, "let me tell you the truth. I am proud, and moody, and bitter. I hate myself at times; and I know, if I married you, and saw you leading an inactive, an inglorious life, through shame of me and of my name, I should grow desperate, and despise both you and myself."

"Madeline, you are frank indeed," said Maurice, in a vexed tone.

"Do not be angry until you have heard all I have to say," she resumed, in her quietest voice. "A man was slain down yonder in that glen," she said, pointing to it as she spoke; "and, innocent or guilty, my father perished for that man's death. You have told me you have doubts of the justice of that sentence, which branded him with a name I carry written on my heart. Well, I have doubts too. If I had not, I should not be sitting here with my hand clasped in yours. My doubts, or rather let me say, my belief, has come to me within the last twenty-four hours, and with it has sprung up this firm resolve, that until I clear my father's name I will be no man's wife."

"Madeline, Madeline!" cried Maurice, "you know not what you are saying. You cannot understand the enormous difficulty and cost of pur-

suing such an inquiry. Yours is a rash vow indeed. You might waste your health, your substance, your life, in striving to fulfil it, and yet fail in the end. And would you make my existence and your own a desert for the sake of this wild hope?"

"No," she answered, sorrowfully, "but I would have you wait for our marriage till the hope is no longer wild, but sober and just; and then I would have you take me in the face of the world, by my own name, and let your first cause—the cause which shall bring you wealth and renown—be mine and my father's."

"And so you would give me my first brief, Madeline?" said Maurice, half smiling. "What a dreamer you are!"

"It is no dream," replied Madeline, quickly. "I will make it a reality."

"And you will make our love a reality also," continued her lover. "I will work with you, heart and soul, if you will promise to be my wife in a year's time."

"A year?" said Madeline, thoughtfully: "yes, my hope will have nothing wild, nothing dream-like about it by that time. I think I can safely promise you. And so great is my faith, that I will not shake it by adding a proviso. I will not say that if my hope crumbles into dust we must part, for I believe such an alternative will never occur."

Maurice did not heed these last words; he looked on Madeline as pledged to him now, and he began to talk, lover-like, of future prospects and future happiness. And as Madeline answered and listened, the hours went swiftly by, till sunset crept upon them, and they thought the day was short.

"I shall tell Mr. Lanyon to-night," whispered Maurice, as they hastened homewards hand in hand, like children, laughing as they went.

To all but the lovers it was a gloomy evening. Lord Crehylls was excited and talkative, but he talked at random, and filled his glass often with a nervous hand. Lady Crehylls was pale and silent, while Mr. Lanyon, with his worn face deeply lined with care, watched her anxiously.

Scarcely was dinner over when Lord Crehylls, murmuring something of an appointment with a farmer, opened the window, and strode away among the tall shadows lying on the lawn. Lady Crehylls rose instantly with tears in her eyes, and quitted the room. Madeline followed and overtook her in the hall.

"Are you not going into the drawing-room, Agatha?" she said, in a disappointed tone. "I want to speak to you. I have something to tell you."

"I am ready to hear you, Miss Sylvester," said Lady Crehylls, coldly.

Leading the way into the drawing-room, Lady

Crehylls seated herself on a lounge by the window. Here her eyes followed her husband's figure, and never turned once towards her companion. Deeply hurt, Madeline stood near her, wondering within herself what new mood had seized this spoiled child of fortune. There was a moment's silence ; then Lady Crehylls broke it.

"Apparently," she said, with a nervous laugh, "you have nothing to say, Miss Sylvester. I am going up to the nursery to see my boy."

She rose as she spoke, and would have passed out of the room, but Madeline barred the way. The two women seemed to have changed character, and it was Madeline who, in her new-found happiness, was quiet and gentle.

"I only wished to tell you," she said, "that I am engaged to Mr. Pellew. I thought you would be glad to hear it."

The colour flew to Lady Crehyll's face, dyeing it a sudden scarlet.

"I am glad to hear it," she answered ; "but remembering all you said to me the other day, it is hard to believe."

With this, Lady Crehylls was gone, sweeping by Madeline coldly, and without another word.

As his daughter quitted the dining-room, Mr. Lanyon looked after her with an uneasy glance. His eyes followed her only ; he never saw the stately figure of Madeline as she passed through

the doorway, and he started when Maurice mentioned her name.

"Has Madeline told you that we are engaged?" he said.

"Yes," returned Mr. Lanyon, "she has told me, Maurice; and I am very thankful—inexpressibly thankful—to hear that your sense and courage have conquered. I knew Madeline loved you, and I believe you will both be very happy. I hope the wedding will be soon."

"Then Madeline has not told you we are to wait a year?" observed Maurice.

"No. And why do so?" asked Mr. Lanyon, playing nervously with his glass. "The fortune I shall give my adopted daughter will be quite sufficient for your mutual comfort, even if your means were much smaller than they are."

"Oh, but I am not the man to live on my wife's money," said Maurice. "And it seems that Madeline has not named to you, that she insists on my following my profession?"

"No," replied Mr. Lanyon; "but I think she is right. I see no reason why you should leave it."

"Nor I," said Maurice, "if, as Madeline supposes, her father was victimized by circumstances, and has in reality left her a stainless name."

Mr. Lanyon set down his glass, and gazed at the young man with a look of amazed fear, which broke in a moment into anger.

"You promised me," he said, "not to mention

to her the fact of the hawker's disappearance. It is the sole fact which throws a shadow of doubt on Walter Sherborne's guilt, and it is a shadow so faint, that it is cruel—yes, I say cruel—to name it to his daughter."

Surprised at his passion, Maurice replied, coldly, "Neither have I named it, Mr. Lanyon. Madeline appears to have formed her opinion on other grounds; perhaps on inquiries she has made in this neighbourhood."

"Impossible!" cried Mr. Lanyon. "She could hear nothing from the people round Crehylls."

"I did not question her on the grounds of her belief," said Maurice. "I was glad to avail myself of it, to overcome her objection to our engagement; but otherwise it is certainly not an agreeable theme to me, any more than to yourself, and I really think it would be wise if we ceased to discuss it. I am resolved on this: I will never lead Madeline's thoughts to this subject, or permit her to enlarge on it to me. She has too morbid a cast of mind already."

"I agree with you entirely," said Mr. Lanyon, with an air of infinite relief. "You have great sense and judgment, Maurice. You will make Madeline forget the whole story when she is your wife. Bury it in oblivion—that is the best and wisest way—bury it deep out of sight for ever. Come, shall we go to the ladies?"

CHAPTER X.



ORD CREHYLLS sauntered gloomily through the avenues of his great park. Instinctively he sought the deepest shadows, and plunged on amid rank grass and tall bracken, growing wildly where the deer loved to browse. The herds were feeding now, and many a startled hind rushed by him in sudden fear as his solitary step brushed the dew, and his solitary shadow, huge and weird-like in the evening sun, came sweeping over their pasturage, swift and ghostly. His thoughts were troubled as he went, and his hasty stride showed the fever of his mind. Why had his wife spoken to him to-day of Madeline—that Madeline whose beautiful face haunted his uneasy dreams, even now at times making him wake from slumber with a low cry of pain upon his lips? What had Agatha heard? Who had told her this old, forgotten story of his foolish boy-love? Had he not suffered enough in it, that it should be raked up now, and flung at him reproachfully by his wife? It was the painfullest memory he had, this romantic boy-passion, which

had been quenched in bloodshed, stifled by the slain corse of Mathew Carbis, and the reproachful, proud face of the ruined gentleman, Walter Sherborne. Why should the haggard eyes, the reckless, gaunt looks of this man, haunt him now? It was not his fault that he died in prison by his own hand. He was far away upon the sea, little guessing of the tragic woe at home. Mr. Lanyon should have saved him for his sake, whether he was guilty or no. Guilty! Who could be reckoned guilty that crushed the life out of such a reptile as Mathew Carbis?

So ran his thoughts, while from amidst the evening mists there grew upon his eyes a pale, lovely face, which smiled and beckoned, then vanished sadly, shrouded in the deep night of mystery and of crime.

Wandering on purposeless, Lord Crehylls found himself at last in the long avenue of beech trees, which ran through the park, and terminated at the entrance-gate and lodge. The glimmer of the tall granite pillars on either side the gate, and the glitter of the Crehylls crest upon the top—a mailed hand crushing a dragon—caught his glance, and as he gazed more steadily, he saw, amid the slanting beams of the setting sun, a man's figure beckoning to him sorrowfully. Hastening his steps involuntarily, he perceived in a moment that the man's face was a dead face, cold and gray as ice. "Michael!" he cried

aloud. Michael did not answer, but he removed his hat, and stood uncovered till his foster-brother reached him, and grasped his hand heartily. But their hands met between the bars of the heavy iron gate, for Lord Crehylls stood within it, and Michael stood without, upon the dusty road.

“Were you coming to the castle, Michael?” asked Lord Crehylls. He flung the gate wide open as he spoke, as though inviting him to enter; but Michael Polgrain stepped back a pace or two, and, catching the swinging gate as it neared him, he closed it gently.

“It is twelve years since I was within this gate,” he said, “and I shall never step within it again, my lord.”

“As you will, Michael,” returned Lord Crehylls, in that sort of tone in which one might speak to a self-willed child. “It is very long, you know, since I took offence at your incivility.”

If any colour could ever rise to Michael Polgrain’s white face it might have risen now; but except a greyer tint upon his cheeks, no change showed his emotion.

“Incivility, do you call it?” he said wistfully. “That’s a hard word for a poor man like me to use, but it would be a harder thing still to do. Lord Crehylls, there is not one among your grand friends would do for you what I would, uncivil or no.”

“Do you think I don’t know that, Michael?” replied the young man, mournfully. “Pleasant acquaintances I have many, and relations a few, but I have but one friend—the same who, as a boy, saved my life when I was drowning, and the same who, as a man, has obstinately refused to accept any kindness from me.”

“Sweet is the bread one earns oneself,” said Michael.

“That’s all very well,” observed Lord Crehylls, pettishly; “but you don’t think, Michael, how you hurt me by your moroseness. It is hard to have all kindness and regard constantly thrown back at one’s own head.”

Michael Polgrain gazed earnestly and sadly at the speaker.

“That’s truth too, I reckon,” he said sorrowfully, “but I can never take a gift from you, for all that. A gift blinds the eye, and deafens the ear, and the world is dark enough to me as it is.”

Humouring him, as we humour those whom some infirmity of brain has taken a point or two beyond the bounds of reason, Lord Crehylls said kindly—“No gift of mine shall ever take the sunshine from you, Michael; but you wont object to Lady Crehylls doing you a kindness, surely?”

Michael looked up quickly, with a painful expression on his pallid face.

"I don't know why we have got upon this talk," he said, in a gruff way. "I didn't come to this gate to talk about myself. Her ladyship is very good, but the hand of a Lanyon shall never give me anything in charity. I want nothing, my lord. I am well off for a poor man."

"You are horribly provoking," returned Lord Crehylls, in a vexed tone; "you make it a reproach to me in the country, that a man who was my foster-brother, the companion of my sickly childhood, the preserver of my life, is permitted by me to be a smuggler and a vagabond."

"If they never bring a worse reproach than that against you and me, my lord," said Michael, "I shall live content. And I am no vagabond; that was a hard word to say."

"Well, Michael, we wont argue the point any more," said Lord Crehylls, "as it is evident we shall never agree. Smuggling, however, is unlawful; and I must tell you, that if you are brought before me by the revenue officers, when I am sitting on the magisterial bench, I shall have to commit you to gaol, no matter what my private feelings may be."

With his pale face growing whiter, and his head still uncovered, Michael Polgrain stood before his foster-brother, hearing this in perfect silence.

“Put on your hat, man,” said Lord Crehylls, impatiently. “Why don’t you leave this smuggling, Michael? You understand me, I hope? You perceive, that if you are captured one of these nights, and brought before me, I must do my duty, even if it cuts me to the heart.”

Michael put his hands before his eyes, as though driving away some mist of darkness which stood there blinding him.

“Yes, yes, my lord,” he said hurriedly, “I understand. You’ll put me in prison and hang me, if the king’s men seize me. It won’t matter much for a poor man like me, whether he dies by drowning or hanging. I have no wife or child to suffer dreadful grief for me; I have no rank and name to fall in the dust when I fall.”

“But you have a sister,” returned Lord Crehylls, much moved; “and surely, Michael, you don’t think me such a stock or stone that I could see you suffer by the law for your offence, without feeling bitter grief?”

“Suffer by the law for your offence,” repeated Michael, dreamily, letting his eye rest for a moment on the handsome, happy face of his friend. “Yes, you’d be sorry for me, I know. But what then?” he continued, echoing the words Lord Crehylls had just said to him. “One must do one’s duty, even if it cuts one to the heart. For only those who leave it undone can

tell what the conscience suffers afterwards. There's a deal of difference, my lord, between wilful blindness and real blindness."

"Who doesn't know that, Michael?" responded Lord Crehylls, more cheerfully. "I wish you would see it your duty to leave off cheating His Majesty's Excise. In fact, I wish with all my heart, my good Michael, you weren't half mad as well as half blind."

The words were a little careless, a little cruel, perhaps, though Lord Crehylls did not mean them so, and he turned on his heel as he spoke, as though the conference were ended, and the expostulation he had uttered were a duty he was glad to be rid of.

"Stop," said Michael, quietly; "don't go yet. I have stood a long while at this gate, hoping to get a word with you, and I have not said it yet. You have talked to me about myself, and I wanted to talk about you."

"About me," cried Lord Crehylls. "Well, Michael, what is it?"

"Only this," he replied, "that if you want me, I am to be found, day and night, at my sister's, Grace Chagwynne's. Mind, I'm there, if sorrow comes upon you; and you wont blame me for it, I hope. I have struggled on so many years,"—here his arms dropped hopelessly by his side,—"but there's no fighting against

Fate. When the day comes, the word and deed appointed for it come too."

Knowing the superstition of the man, Lord Crehylls did not wonder much at this speech.

"Well, Michael," he said, with a light laugh, "if trouble comes to me, I wont lay it upon your head. Never fear that. And I wont promise to knock you up, either in the day or night, to tell you of it."

"You are mistaken there," said Michael, calmly. "You must come to me, and me only. One thing more: I've got the fastest craft in the Channel now: don't forget that. She is called the *Penkivel*. I named her that because she is built of Penkivel oak."

"And so you defy the revenue cutters?" interrupted Lord Crehylls, bursting into a laugh. "Don't take me any further into your confidence, Michael; it is dangerous to tell one's secrets."

The light words went away upon the summer breeze, blowing over Michael Polgrain's uncovered head, but they sounded in his ears with a terrible strength, and made him shudder from head to foot.

"The *Penkivel* is schooner-rigged, and faster than any brig or cutter on the coast," he said, gravely. "I could take you and Lady Crehylls and the boy a cruise at an hour's notice."

"Thank you," said Lord Crehylls, laughing

again ; “ that would a merry trip, Michael, with all the king’s men racing after us ! ”

“ The king’s men can no more catch the *Pen-kivel*, than they can take the moon up out of the sea in a dipper,” said Michael, in the same grave way. “ Good night, my lord.”

He did not tender the young nobleman his hand. Lord Crehylls might forget the difference in their rank, but Michael never did.

“ Why, Michael, you are as surly as a bear,” cried Lord Crehylls. “ If you wont step within my gate, even to shake hands with me, I must come out to you.”

The heavy gate swung behind him as he spoke, and the two young men stood on the dusty summer road, with clasped hands, and a curious softening look of the old affection of boyhood gathering wistfully on both their faces. Yet, what a contrast they were ! Lord Crehylls so handsome, fresh, and young, with life in the glow on his cheek and the sparkle of the eye ; and Michael, grey and ashen, with death in all his leaden aspect.

“ It does one good to see you look so well,” said Michael ; and his hand tightened its clasp, and his dull eyes brightened as their gaze met the clear, shining glance of his friend.

“ I wish I could say the same,” returned Lord Crehylls ; “ but truly, Michael, you are the most dismal fellow I ever saw. And how you walk

about with that countenance, I can't tell. If I had such a face, I should not be alive a week."

Michael's hand had relaxed its hold, and he turned away with a curious twitching of the lip, which scarcely seemed a smile; but Lord Crehylls, in his careless health and ease, his gay indifference, and thoughtless enjoyment of his own overflowing cup of daily joys, never noted it. He had always patronized Michael Polgrain from a boy, and he patronized him still, and sometimes half praised himself for the constancy of his affection, and thought he was really somewhat of a good fellow, because neither rank, nor education, nor absence had been able to destroy the old kindly feeling of brotherhood between them.

This had arisen naturally enough. Lord Crehylls had been the sickliest of infants, the puniest of children, and for years his nurse—kind, motherly Grace Polgrain—was the sole creature who could soothe the suffering fretful boy. She was a young widow, whose husband, a miner, had been killed when blasting a rock underground; hence there was no tie to hinder her from performing a mother's duty to the little sickly lordling placed in her charge. She stipulated only that her own infant should not be separated from her. To this Lady Crehylls was obliged to consent, and so the little Michael came to the castle with his mother. Years passed on, and she still remained there, the young heir

of Crehylls being too sickly to be entrusted to other hands. His life, his health, weighed down all other considerations, and since Grace would not stay without her son, the boy was permitted to remain also. It was something wonderful to see the consideration shown by the healthy child to the sickly one, the tender care and pity, which Grace taught her boy to feel, for the pale puny foster-brother, who was so much his superior in rank as he was inferior in strength. Her own heart being full of the old feudal deference for the Crehylls, which was a part of her religion, she instilled the same feeling into the soul of the youthful Michael, so that to yield up life, will, and happiness for the pleasure of his little patrician playmate, seemed to him quite a natural and proper state of things. It never struck him in the light of a sacrifice, or an injustice; his loyalty was too pure for that: it was simply a duty, nothing more. With the old Tory principles of their time deep rooted in their minds, and unshaken as yet by French conventions and the Cap of Liberty, it was not likely that Lord and Lady Crehylls would see any injustice in all this either. Thus it was not because their son might grow selfish and ungenerous beneath such teaching, that at six years of age they sought to separate the children, but rather because they deemed it wrong to permit any longer an unwise companionship.

It was a sad day when Michael and Grace quitted the Castle ; and without them Geoffrey pined, and was laid on a bed of sickness again.

Just at this time another son was born to the house of Crehylls ; and Lady Crehylls, ill and nervous, hastily recalled Grace and her boy to the aid of her first-born. Finally, the children were not separated till they were nearly nine years old, when Geoffrey's increased stature and strength enabled him to support the fatigue of lessons. But the boys still met often ; and at twelve years of age, when Michael was a big, strong lad, and a wonderful swimmer, he saved his foster-brother's life when cramp had seized him in bathing. After this there was nothing Lord Crehylls, the father, would not have done for Michael. He offered to apprentice him to any trade he chose ; but the boy loved the sea, and the thought of apprenticeship in a town seemed stifling and hideous to him. So a share was bought for him in a fishing-smack and a seine, and he was perfectly content. From early association his manner and language were above his lowly position, but he still remained perfectly uneducated. Ignorant, the present world would call him ; but his knowledge, for all that, far surpassed many a bookworm's. He knew things, not books ; he had studied the secrets of the sea, and he grew learned in things upon the earth and under the earth. Many a polished gentleman,

whose ponderous learning hung heavy upon him, unpractical and useless, had been forced to bow to Michael Polgrain's wisdom in ores and lodes, in birds and fishes, plants and rocks, wind and weather. It was strange that the old Lord and Lady Crehylls had never thought of educating their son's companion ; but there were no schools for the lower classes in those days, and the very notion of teaching the poor was heresy and schism, madness and revolution. So Michael Polgrain educated himself out of the great book of Nature, and never learned even to read and write.

This little history of the mutual boyhood of these two men is necessary, in order to show how strong was the tie between them, in spite of those social distinctions which set their lives outwardly so far apart.

" Good night ! " they said to each other ; and Michael went up the long road in darkness, while Lord Crehylls, with a careless whistle, turned back to the park.

CHAPTER XI.



“OLLO!” cried a testy voice; do you want to be run over, man?”

Michael Polgrain stepped out of the way quickly, and raised his hat with due civility to the rubicund visage of Justice Pydar. The old gentleman was in a low pony-chaise, with his gouty foot reposing on a cushion.

“Do you know if my lord is at home?” he asked, pulling up the pony with a jerk.

“He was at the gate a minute ago,” replied Michael.

“I’m glad of that,” cried the justice; “it will save me the trouble of going up to the house. Run and tell him I want to speak with him a moment.”

“With me?” said Lord Crehylls, when in two minutes Michael reached the lodge, and delivered the message. “What is going on now, I wonder? Have the French landed and carried off the Lizard?”

This last question was addressed to the old

justice himself, who had driven now up close to the gate.

"Well, no," he answered, "I don't think they'll put the Land's End, or the Lizard either, in a French museum this year. The fact is, I wanted to see you about a letter."

Here the justice fumbled in his pockets vainly.

"Hold the pony, Polgrain!" he cried, as he dropped the reins, and plunged both hands into his pockets. "Ah, here it is! Now, just read that, Lord Crehylls, will you, please? Can you see? is there light enough?"

"Plenty," returned Lord Crehylls, as he held the letter slightly aslant to catch the fading light. Then he read aloud as follows:—

"SIR,—Seeing your name in the commission of the peace, we are induced to make inquiry of you respecting the daughter of the late Walter Sherborne. Any information that you can give us we shall be duly grateful for. We beg to call your attention to the enclosed advertisement, which will sufficiently explain our reason for wishing to discover the young lady in question. We acted for many years as solicitors to her great-aunt, the late Mrs. Singleton of Lymington; and we are now acting on the behalf of her great-nephew, Thomas Singleton, Esq., to whom, with her great-niece, Miss Sherborne, she has left her property, the same to be equally divided between them."

Here followed the signatures of the Lymington attorneys ; and beneath this, carefully gummed to the letter-paper, was the following advertisement, evidently cut from a London journal :—

“ WANTED,—Any information respecting the only daughter of a gentleman named Walter Sherborne, who quitted the neighbourhood of Lymington about fifteen years ago, and has not since been heard of. The young lady will hear of something to her advantage if she will apply,” &c.

Lord Crehylls did not finish reading this, but stopped to look up with blank surprise at Mr. Pydar.

“ This is very strange,” he said. “ I always understood from Mr. Lanyon that the child of this—this very unfortunate man Sherborne, was sent to this great-aunt by her own request.”

“ That couldn’t be, you see,” observed the justice.

“ So it seems,” returned Lord Crehylls. “ Well, I cannot give you any information respecting her. I was sailing round the world just at that time, if you recollect.” His voice shook slightly, but his face was as bright and untroubled as ever.

“ Perhaps Mr. Lanyon can tell you something of the young lady, sir,” observed Michael,

turning his white face towards the justice. He spoke eagerly, and his dull eyes shone with an unwonted light. "Oh, if this should take her away, far away," he said within himself, "perhaps the lot I have drawn may be spared me yet."

"Well, yes, of course Mr. Lanyon will know who took her away from St. Eglon's Hut," returned Mr. Pydar. "But then it is such an inconvenient hour to trouble you all at the Castle?" he added, looking at Lord Crehylls, inquiringly.

If he expected the ordinary civil reply that the hour was a matter of no consequence, he was disappointed, for Lord Crehylls caught at this instantly as an excuse for delay.

"Yes, you are right," he said, "it is quite late; and Mr. Lanyon is not well. I think you had better drive over in the morning, and see him about it."

"As you will, my lord," returned the justice, in rather a glumpy tone. "Perhaps you would like to take the letter with you, and let Mr. Lanyon look at it."

"No, no," said Lord Crehylls, hastily, drawing back from the proffered boon, "I'll have nothing to do with it, thank you. Let these attorneys find their heiress themselves."

"Take the letter, my lord, for the love of

mercy," whispered Michael, touching him on the arm.

"Eh, what?" cried Mr. Pydar, leaning forward to catch the faint words. "What does Polgrain say?"

"Nothing," returned Lord Crehylls, shaking off his hand, "except that the dew is falling, and that wont improve your gout, Mr. Pydar."

"No, indeed," cried the old gentleman, gathering up the reins hastily: "and I've good four miles to drive to get home. So you wont take the letter?"

"No," replied Lord Crehylls, coldly: "and I really don't see, why you should come to me at all for information, respecting this Miss Sherborne."

"You forget the Sherbornes were your tenants," observed the justice.

"My tenants!" exclaimed Lord Crehylls, angrily. "I was a boy at that disastrous time. It was my trustee—it was Mr. Lanyon—who let them have St. Eglon's Hut."

"Well, well, and doubtless he'll be able to tell me all about the girl," said Mr. Pydar, in a pacific voice.

"You can ask him to-morrow," said Lord Crehylls. "Good night."

He turned away so very decidedly, that Mr. Pydar was fain to drive off, greatly wondering in his own mind at the unwonted ill temper

which the young nobleman had displayed. He might have wondered still more had he heard the oath which followed him.

"Meddling old fool!" exclaimed Lord Crehylls. "Why does he not let the lawyers do their own work? Why should he drive about the country, raking up a story at which my soul sickens? Michael, I could scarcely keep my temper."

Michael stood like a man lost and terror-struck, with his eyes fixed on Lord Crehylls and his hands drooping powerless by his side.

"Of what use is it to blame him?" he said, slowly. "I dare say the letter was in fact sent to his brother, the attorney; and the justice's second son, you know, is in his uncle's office."

"You have hit the truth, Michael," said Lord Crehylls, laughing nervously. "And, depend upon it, there is a good round sum offered to the lawyer if he finds the girl; and the old justice has got a mind to share it."

"Likely enough," said Michael, in the same calm way; "but why did you not take the letter, my lord? It would have been better for us all if you had."

"I would not touch the letter," returned the other, energetically. "Why should I question and cross-question Mr. Lanyon on a subject from which he shrinks with pain and disgust? I gave him trouble enough when a boy about

these people. I will not be the one to trouble him again with their names. No; if he must be worried, let the lawyers come and do it. They enjoy it—I don't."

It is impossible to say how wistfully Michael looked, and listened as the young man said this.

"But you'll tell Mr. Lanyon," he cried. "You won't let the old justice come, and frighten him in the morning?"

"Frighten him!" repeated Lord Crehylls, in an angry tone. "What are you talking of, Michael?"

"Mr. Lanyon is an old man, my lord," said Michael. "I mean, it might hurt him to be taken by surprise."

"Well, well, I'll name it to him to-night," said Lord Crehylls; "but it will be a hateful task. Ah, Michael," he added, suddenly grasping his foster-brother's hand, "you can scarcely guess how I dread any allusion to that terrible time!"

"That's not hard to guess," said Michael. "But this is all for the best. I am glad the young lady will come into a fortune."

"I am neither glad nor sorry," said Lord Crehylls. "I only wish they would not come here to look for her."

He walked away as he spoke, and Michael followed him a step or two to say, "You'll come

to me if you want me? And, mind, the *Penkivel* is the fastest craft in the Channel."

There were lights in the drawing-room when Lord Crehylls got back, and these, as he entered, showed his hair lank with dew, and his face somewhat flushed and troubled. He looked round anxiously for his wife, but she was not present; and it was strange how heavily this slight disappointment sank upon his heart, weighing it down as with some great misfortune.

"Where is Agatha?" he said, as he sat down wearily, leaning his arm on the table near him.

No one answered, each one seemed to wait for the other to speak, and it was Mr. Lanyon at last who looked up from his paper to say, "I have not seen her since dinner."

"Nor I," observed Maurice. Madeline was silent.

Then Lord Crehylls took up a paper-knife, and seizing a magazine on the table, he began to cut the leaves rapidly. It was while he did this, bending his head over the pages, that he said abruptly, "I am afraid you will have a troublesome visitor to-morrow morning, Mr. Lanyon. Old Mr. Pydar is coming here. I saw him just now at the entrance gate, and stopped him from worrying you to-night."

"His visit wont trouble me much," said Mr. Lanyon, carelessly.

"I fear it will vex you," said his son-in-law,

gravely. "He comes to make inquiries respecting a missing heiress, the daughter of—of those terrible people who lived at St. Eglon's Hut."

Madeline started, and half rose from her chair, while Maurice turned sharply towards her, and laid his hand restrainingly on her arm. He listened anxiously for Mr. Lanyon's answer, but not a word fell from his lips.

"It appears," continued Lord Crehylls, as he turned the pages of his book with a quick, nervous hand, "that some old lady has died, and left her property to—to this young lady; and the lawyers who have the charge of her affairs fancy you can give them some information concerning her."

Again Madeline would have risen, and again Maurice's restraining hand held her silent; again, also, he listened vainly for Mr. Lanyon's answer.

The continued silence made Lord Crehylls look up, and then he saw the three faces of his listeners bent on him in strange excitement. Mr. Lanyon, pale as death, Maurice flushed and eager, Madeline with eyes that blazed, and lips standing apart and quivering.

"And so," resumed Lord Crehylls, more slowly, as his glance wandered from one to the other, "old Pydar, whose brother the attorney has evidently been written to on the subject, is coming here to learn from you what became of

the child when—when she was left alone at St. Eglon's Hut."

The effort with which he said this was visible, and the hand which he passed across his forehead trembled.

"The answer to that question is easily given," said Mr. Lanyon, forcing his voice into calmness. "I sent the child to a distant relative,—a Mrs. Singleton, at Lymington."

Maurice heard this with consternation, and Madeline rose decidedly, and walked forward till she stood beneath the full blaze of the chandelier, where the wax lights flung their glow on her crimson face.

"Unfortunately," said Lord Crehylls, a little drily, "it is that very relative's executors who are searching for her, advertising for her, and writing for her, declaring she has never been seen at Lymington."

"Very well," said Mr. Lanyon, still calmly, "then she must have been lost by the way. I can tell them nothing more."

"Mr. Lanyon!" exclaimed Maurice.

"I will speak to you another time, Mr. Pellew," said Mr. Lanyon, in a decided tone.

"But you will speak to me now," interposed Madeline, in a steady, calm voice, whose clear tones rang through the room. "You will let me tell Lord Crehylls the truth; I am weary of falsehood. I cannot aid in this deception."

"Do you know anything of this matter, Miss Sylvester?" asked Lord Crehylls in extreme surprise.

"Be silent, Madeline!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon. "You owe me obedience. I demand it of you now."

"But you have commanded me all my life long to live beneath a lie," she returned, steadily, "and that makes obedience too hard for me. If I do not fear the truth, why should you?"

"Do you care so much for this money?" said Mr. Lanyon, coming forward to whisper the words in her ear. "I will double this fortune, whatever it may be, if you will be silent."

Madeline was stung now into bitterness, and as she stood beneath the great chandelier, with the blaze of many lights falling on her, Maurice saw her cheeks burning with a deep crimson, and her eyes shining with unshed tears.

"You never loved me, Mr. Lanyon," she said, with inexpressible pathos; "but I did not know, until this moment, that you scorned me. You have offered me money to be silent. I would rather die now than not speak. Lord Crehylls, I will not remain another instant beneath your roof deceiving you. I am Madeline Sherborne, the daughter of that man and that woman, whose miserable lives have left a shadow of shame, and sorrow even on the house where they dwelt. Haunted by their sad presence, St.

Eglon's Hut brings now to every mind thoughts of mystery and of crime."

The clasped hands, the bowed head, the mingling of pride and shame in her aspect, all moved Maurice to admiration, and riveted his glance upon her face; thus he did not perceive that Lord Crehylls was gazing at her as though he saw a spectre, while Mr. Lanyon was pale with fear.

"You do not answer me," said Madeline, looking from one to the other with pained eyes. "Is there such a brand upon me that my name shocks you into silence?"

"Miss Sylvester," said Lord Crehylls, in a voice he strove to make clear and courteous, "no gentleman would ever allude in your presence to events, which render you an object of respectful sympathy, and pity to every thinking heart. I thank you for your truth and candour, but I object most strenuously to the deception, which has been practised on Lady Crehylls and myself for a long series of years. I object to a lady being forced on my wife as a companion under a false name, and on false pretences; I object to any guest being brought beneath my roof under any character or any name except her own; and I call upon Mr. Lanyon to explain to me his reasons for such a strange course of conduct. Will you answer me, sir? What have you to say to this?"

“Nothing,” replied Mr. Lanyon, with white lips—“nothing.”

“Nothing!” exclaimed Lord Crehylls, hotly. “But I consider, Mr. Lanyon, that you owe me an explanation. I am sorry to say anything to pain Miss Sherborne, but you force me to speak frankly. You have chosen, with doubtful prudence, to give your daughter a companion whose very name breathes a horror to men’s hearts; but when Agatha became my wife you should have remembered that I claim a right to select her acquaintances, and I confess—without meaning the slightest unkindness to a young lady whose character I respect—that I would never willingly have brought her in contact with the name of Sherborne. You have done me a wrong, Mr. Lanyon, a cruel wrong.”

“A wrong!” repeated the old man, gazing round him in a bewildered way,—“Good heavens, hear him! He says I have done him a wrong!”

Erect and firm, though very pale, Madeline came to him swiftly, and stood by his side.

“If he has done you and Lady Crehylls a wrong in forcing me upon your acquaintance,” she said, “it is a wrong easily rectified. I am perfectly willing henceforth to look upon you and her as strangers; and I am ready to leave your roof this moment.”

“Lord Crehylls,” exclaimed Maurice, “do you

consider it manly to force such words as these from the lips of a young lady—your guest?”

But Lord Crehylls set his question aside like a feather.

“I insist on it that an explanation is due to me,” he said, with increased passion. “Mr. Lanyon, you know that the name of Sherborne is hateful to me, and, from out the whole world, one of that blood and of that breed would be the last I would admit to my hearth, or my friendship. What! am I to be cheated into receiving a Sherborne?—cheated into liking a Sherborne?—cheated into making a Sherborne the companion of my wife? What answer do you give me to this, Mr. Lanyon?”

“Nothing,” replied the old man again, “except that you are mad, and cannot understand the horrible injustice of your words.”

“Injustice, indeed,” cried Maurice, indignantly. “I think, Lord Crehylls, however great your hatred may be against the Sherbornes, or however great the cause, you might, as a gentleman, spare the feelings of an innocent girl, who is quite as much their victim as ever you can be.”

Lord Crehylls looked at him, and listened to him, without taking in the sense of his words. His usual good-natured ease, his presence of mind, his courtesy and good temper, were all gone—vanished in the tempest of his passion.

“You do not comprehend this matter, Pellew,”

he said, setting him aside ; “ it is an affair between me and Mr. Lanyon. I mean no unkindness to Miss—Miss Sylvester ; but he knows how odious, how more than hateful to me, must be the presence of a Sherborne. And I assert that no man in my own house has a right to subject me to torture. Do you still say nothing, Mr. Lanyon ? Do you still refuse to give me your reason for doing this ? ”

Mr. Lanyon’s careworn face was turned towards him wistfully as he spoke, as though anxious to catch his words, hoping they would be softer, and when the last angry question fell upon his ear, his courage seemed to break down suddenly, and holding his trembling hands upward, he murmured, “ For his sake and hers—great heavens, for his sake ! Oh Geoffrey, Geoffrey, you were like a son to me ! Your father gave you and your brother into my hands on his deathbed. I was bound to hold you safe.”

“ Is that all your answer ? ” cried Lord Crehylls, still beside himself with some strange emotion. “ Let us talk of those things another time. I ask now, why you took upon yourself the guardianship of the child, of such people as Walter Sherborne and his wife ? ”

“ Let me answer you,” said Madeline, with the superb calm of her manner still unruffled, still hiding the fiery lava beneath. “ He took me, because in the great charity of his heart, he had

pity on the orphan, who was cast out both by friends and relations. This woman, now dead, who has left me her money, refused me a shelter then. And so, when all the world forsook me, this noble heart gave me a home, and hid the generous deed even from his daughter. You ask why he called me by a false name, why he has deceived you with regard to my sorrowful parentage. I answer you, it was because he was over-pitiful, over-generous ; he wished to shield me from the curse that clings to the wicked ; he thought to give me a city of refuge wherein I should escape from that law which says, the ‘ sins of the fathers ’ shall be visited ‘ upon the children.’ Lord Crehylls, twenty times this evening you have insulted me cruelly, twenty times you have shown me the hatred and loathing you have for the blood that runs in my veins ; let it suffice that hatred then, to know that I have not escaped this curse. The wall of false honour and respect, so generously built up around me, has been no barrier to the shame and pain, the burning pain, that always quivers in my heart. Does that soften you, Lord Crehylls ? Or do you, in your unstained rectitude, your nobility and honourable pride, still despise me too much to feel pity ? ”

As she uttered this, rapidly, but with steadfast calm, and as she praised him, Mr. Lanyon listened with dilated eyes full of haggard fear, and a face

that grew wan and shadowy. But above all, he shrank when she appealed to Lord Crehylls' pride and untainted honour.

"Cease, Madeline, cease!" he said, grasping her arm with his thin hand.

"I cannot cease," she answered. "I will do you justice. Only a few days ago, Lord Crehylls, I reproached the compassionate heart and hand that had rescued my childhood from misery. I said it would have been better for me, if I had been left alone to grow hard, and callous beneath the sharp edge of woe and want. I retract that word now. I own myself grateful, most grateful, to Mr. Lanyon; for I see how easy it would have been for him to have left me thus to the world,—I see how hard it was for him to succour me. So hard, that he had to hide the generous deed from his daughter, and to-night he has to lower his head before the reproaches of his son."

She ceased. But she ceased with her arms around Mr. Lanyon, and her tears and kisses falling on his woe-worn face. And then, raising her hand once more, she cried out, "Forgive me, dear! forgive me. I have been so proud and wilful, so unloving and hard. I did not think of all you suffered for my sake—no, not till to-night, when I heard you reproached for your goodness, when I heard you answer him nothing in reply to his questions, because you were too noble to speak

of your kindness, too noble to boast of your own worthy deed."

Like a man bereft of sense, Mr. Lanyon heard her dimly and strove to free himself from her clinging arms. Her words were torture, her kisses torture, her caressing touch terrible,—he could not bear them; and as he broke from her clasping hands, he tottered, and fell feebly to the ground. Lord Crehylls rushed forward and raised him, and it was then that Maurice, bending over Madeline, put his arm around her tenderly.

"I am justified in my love," he said to himself, proudly; "she is a noble woman, in spite of faults."

But Madeline did not heed his whisper or his caress; she knelt by the side of Mr. Lanyon, in an agony of grief.

"We have all spoken selfishly," she cried, "not thinking of his weakness. Lord Crehylls, I meant to quit your house to-night,—now I conquer all my own feelings, and say, let me remain and nurse him."

"Stay," said Lord Crehylls; "I have no quarrel with you, Madeline."

Whether it was contrition for the cruel words he had uttered, or grief at Mr. Lanyon's state, or remembrance of his boy-love, who can say? But as he spoke her name his voice took a strange inflection of tenderness. And at this very instant, Lady Crehylls entered the room.

“Here is Agatha,” he said, almost wildly ;
“be silent, I entreat you.”

His wife heard his words, and her heart felt cold and dead.

“Your father is ill,—he is taken suddenly ill,”
said her husband, looking up at her.

Then the room swam around her ; and with eyes almost blinded, she took her father’s white head from Madeline’s hands and laid it on her lap.

CHAPTER XII.



SMALL, cramped room in a small house, and a sickly woman propped up by pillows on a hard, stiff chair, around her a heap of shreds and patchwork of many colours, and over all the room an unutterable aspect of forlorn wretchedness, discomfort, and woe. A broken cage hung at the window, mended here and there roughly with twig and twine, and from within there came at times a feeble chirp, showing the wretched little feathery inmate was still alive, though lean with famine and grimy with dirt. On the floor sat three hard-faced children, big-eyed and big-mouthed, squabbling with each other with a spasmodic eagerness born of weariness, and want. Upon the woman's lap there lay a heap of little shreds of silk, like those littered around her, and with trembling, fevered fingers she cut them into hearts, diamonds, or rounds, and sewed them into needle-books and pincushions. She did not weep as she worked—she was long past that; but ever and anon a certain tremulous movement of the lip showed

that although tears might be repressed, through patience and habit, yet suffering was busy at her heart, and spoke at times in a gasping sob or a weary sigh.

"Be quiet, children!" she cried, eagerly. "I hear a step; run and see if it is your brother Tom." No one stirred. "Why don't you go, Edward?" she said, fretfully.

"Because I don't choose," answered the biggest boy. "I'm always on the run. I fetched candles last night, and thread this morning. Make Alice go; she never does anything."

"You are a great story," cried the indignant Alice. "I do lots of things. Who tidies the room, I wonder, except me?"

"A pretty sort of tidiness," retorted the boy. "The room is beastly. We are the wretchedest lot in all the row. I heard one of the neighbours say so last night."

'Too sickly and feeble to enforce obedience and order, or indeed to do anything except the poor work she held in her trembling fingers, the invalid leant back on the stiff chair, and closed her patient eyes wearily. Then tears came one by one dropping down on her thin hands unheeded.

"The wretchedest lot," she repeated, vaguely. "Yes, none more wretched on the earth. And all my fault—all."

"There, Ted, you have made mother cry," observed Alice. "I'll tell Tom of you."

"She's always crying," said Ted, placidly; "so what does it matter?"

At this moment the step which, during this dialogue, had been heard plainly coming down the dismal, quiet, suburban row, stopped now at the door, and a hand with a sharp jerk pulled the bell.

"That is not Tom," cried the sick woman, and her pale face grew blanched with fear. "Go to the door one of you, and see who it is."

"And suppose it is the tax-gatherer, or the water-rate," asked Alice, "what am I to say?"

"Say your brother is not in, but he'll be sure to attend to it in a day or two."

At this instant a man's face looked in at the window, and the sick woman, letting her work fall from her lap, shrieked aloud.

"It's father!" said the gaunt children, in a trembling voice, and the girl Alice began to cry, while the youngest, a boy of four, crept instinctively to his mother's side.

"Open the door," cried the man, with an oath.

There was no disobedience now. Both the boy and girl ran frightened to the door, and undid the bolt with trembling hands. Then, as they set it open, there came a swaggering step, an oath, a blow, and a smothered cry from the boy, who staggered beneath it.

"We were as quick as we could be, father. Oh, don't beat Ted," cried Alice.

The man stooped, and putting his hideous face against the child's, he kissed her. A kiss from such a man seemed worse, more dreadful than a blow, and so the girl seemed to feel it, for she shrank against the wall, cowed and shuddering. Passing her, as heedless of this as of all else, the man entered the dingy, untidy room with a careless air, and sat down opposite his wife.

"You don't look particularly glad to see me," he said, with a laugh.

There was no answer, except for the nervous claspings and unclasping of her hands, and the upraised look to Heaven, as though appealing to the justice of God against the injustice of man.

"Well, Mrs. Rathline, I don't exactly expect smiles and kisses on my arrival," continued her husband. "Is there anything to eat and drink in the house?"

"There is a loaf and a bit of salt butter," she said, feebly.

The amiable Mr. Rathline received this intelligence with a face of great disgust.

"Here, Ted," he cried, "come to your mother for some money; and then go and fetch me a plate of hot roast beef at the cookshop round the corner, and bring a pint of hollands to wet it with."

"I have no money for such things," expostulated his wife, in the same meek way.

"Nonsense! We always kill the fatted calf for the prodigal's return," said Mr. Rathline, playfully; and, making one stride to her chair, he seized her by the wrist with a grasp which seemed strong enough to crush the bone. "Look at these pretty little things," he cried, tossing the bits of silk into the air. "Where are our earnings for these? Oh, we make three or four shillings a week sometimes with our needle and thread. You see I know all about it."

Pale with agony and fear, his victim implored him meekly to release his cruel grasp on her arm.

"I thought you wanted help to find your purse, my dear," said Mr. Rathline.

The hideous assumption of playfulness with which he cruelly twisted her arm as he said this, and finally jerked her from her seat, and flung her like a rag into the corner of the room, was horrible to see. It was an ugly spectacle altogether,—the frightened, sobbing woman, the shrieking children, and the brute in man's form, who stood like a torturer over his victims, enjoying their pain. With one hand hanging useless, and livid marks around her wrist, Mrs. Rathline took her purse from her pocket, and gave it to him.

"I wonder you are not ashamed to take it," she said, hysterically. "The money is my own—

my own earnings. When do you ever bring a penny into the house?"

Ignoring this question, the delightful Mr. Rathline replied only to the preceding remark.

"Your own money! Your own earnings!—eh? That's something new, that is. Apparently, Mrs. Rathline, you are not aware that a married woman can never possess half-a-crown of her own. You have no money—it is mine; you have no earnings—they are mine. That's the law of the land, that is." And Mr. Rathline looked round the room grimly. "And I should like to know what woman is going to alter it?"

During this exposition of the just laws of his country, both Mr. Rathline and his hard-featured boy Ted swelled considerably, as though the beauty, and power, and majesty of this equitable code added to their own individual importance. Alice, however, looked from the one to the other with a face of consternation.

"If that's the law, father," she said, "I'll be lazy as the days are long when I get married."

Mr. Rathline, over whom his daughter appeared to have a slightly softening influence, laughed at this, and patted her on the head.

"That's the law," he repeated; "and so let us see how much money of mine Mrs. Rathline

has got in this purse. Only three and sixpence!" he cried, as he emptied the contents into his palm. "Come, come, this wont do at all! You are not going to humbug me like this, Mrs. Rathline. Out with your hoards!"

"You can kill me if you like," said Mrs. Rathline; "but I have not a penny more in the world."

"Will you dare tell me that, when your old aunt, Madge Singleton, is dead?" cried her husband. "You can't blind me; I know all about it. You thought to keep it a secret, I suppose; but you are mistaken."

"My aunt would not help me living, and she has not helped me in dying," replied his wife. "She has left me nothing."

"But she has left a fortune to Tom," he said. "Our 'dear Tom' has got the money. Oh, you can't cheat me. And now you are rich, I am coming back to live among you, and be a father to you all again."

This declaration brought a blank look of dismay to the children's faces, and the little one clinging to his mother burst into a loud cry.

"You are mistaken," said Mrs. Rathline, as she hushed the child on her lap; "Tom has not come into a fortune; and if he had, you have no claim on him. You can't compel my first husband's son to maintain you."

Mr. Rathline smiled contemptuously at this speech. He knew his power, and he knew how to use it.

"But I can compel Tom Singleton's mother, who is my wife, to live with me," he observed, carelessly, "and I shall do it, unless Tom makes it worth my while to keep myself still as a gay bachelor."

"You don't seem to know," continued his wife, trying to speak bravely, "that Tom has not got aunt's money, and can't have it. She has left it between him and Walter Sherborne's daughter, and he is not to have a shilling till the girl is found, nor even then unless——"

She stopped suddenly, for so strange a look had come over Mr. Rathline's face, that it checked her speech in amazement.

"Here, Ted," he said, huskily, throwing the silver across the table, "take this, and fetch me some dinner. Your mother's news are hard to swallow."

The boy departed instantly, and Mr. Rathline stationed himself at the window to watch for his return, and there, with his face completely hidden from her view, he ordered his wife to continue her story.

"There is not much more to tell," she said, "except that Aunt Madge has left a queer will. Tom is not to have the money unless he marries her great-niece, Margaret Madeline Sherborne,

and if he does not fulfil this condition, the money is to accumulate till either Tom or Miss Sherborne dies, then it will be paid over to the survivor."

"Then Tom has not got a chance," observed Mr. Rathline, "for the Sherbornes live as long as oaks. Why, your aunt was ninety, wasn't she?"

"Nearly," was the reply—"she was eighty-seven. I know the Sherbornes are wonderfully strong," she added, with a sigh at her own weakness; "but I don't see why Tom should not find this girl, and marry her."

"Find her!" repeated Mr. Rathline. "That's not likely. She is gone to the deuce by this time. But why did old Madge Singleton make such a will?"

"How can I tell?" responded his wife, feebly; "unless it was to give Tom and me trouble. Perhaps she thought she was doing fairly, when she left the money between her own great-niece and her husband's great-nephew; but it is my belief she wanted her own blood—the Sherborne girl—to have it all; else why did she make it a condition that Tom should marry her?"

At this point in the conversation Mr. Rathline's dinner made its appearance, and he betook himself to his repast with great cheerfulness, first, however, carefully pocketing the small change

left from the three shillings and sixpence. It was nothing to him, that he devoured at this meal as much as would have kept his wife and children for two days; it was nothing to him that he had robbed them of the power to procure food for days to come. No consideration for others impaired his appetite; and the more he ate and drank, the more disagreeable he became.

"Well, Mrs. Rathline," he said, as he primed himself with a glass of raw spirits, "I am sorry to make a painful observation, but unless you can find your husband a little more money, that ill-used individual will be compelled to call in a broker, and dispose of a few of these effects."

"You will not dare to rob us any more!" exclaimed his wife, gasping for breath. "The miserable bit of furniture there is in the house belongs to Tom. I paid for it with his money."

"And because you bought it, and you paid for it, my love, it belongs to me," returned Mr. Rathline, with great ease of manner. The law and the power being on his side, he could afford to keep his temper, and to hear unmoved the tears and cries of his victims.

"If Tom were home you would not dare say so," exclaimed his wife, with the courage of despair. "You know Tom is gone to Lymington, else you would not be here to-day."

"Exactly, my dear," he replied. "Now, can you find me any more money?"

A sob was the only answer; and hiding her face with her thin right hand—the left lay swelled and useless in her lap—the wretched wife wept silently.

Mr. Rathline drank another glass of spirits, and then peremptorily ordered Ted to go and fetch a broker. Pending the arrival of this individual, he condescended to explain more fully his present proceedings.

"I am in a fix, Mrs. Rathline," he remarked, "and therefore I must have money. I thought to find you pretty well off, as your aunt was dead; but as things are as they are, I am obliged to sell you up. It is a cursed affair, that old woman raking up those dead and gone Sherbornes. They wont do me any good, nor you either; therefore I shall keep clear of them. It is evident that you and Tom wont get any of this fortune; for, if the girl is found—and I don't believe she will be, she must have died in a ditch or a workhouse long ago—the marriage may be as far off as ever. She may be married already, or she may refuse to marry Tom. What does the will say, then?"

Mrs. Rathline looked up at this in weak amazement.

"Refuse to marry Tom!" she said. "Is it likely, such a girl as Walter Sherborne's daughter

must be, will refuse to marry an industrious good young man like 'Tom? No indeed. But what I can't bear is, that he should sacrifice himself—as I know he will—for my sake. It is frightful to think that he should be obliged to marry that dreadful man's daughter. I shall hate her, I know I shall."

The answer to this was a strange gulp in Mr. Rathline's throat, followed by a hasty draught of spirits.

"The will!" he cried, hoarsely; "I asked you what the will said?"

"I am sure, Mr. Rathline, I don't know why I should tell you anything—you, who are such a bitter enemy to me," returned the weak Mrs. Rathline, querulously; "and I wouldn't do it, only Tom said, you could read the will yourself for a shilling, at some place where the doctors have their commons: so I suppose wills are no secrets, and I may just as well tell you all I can understand about this one. Aunt Madge has left her money very unfairly. If Tom refuses to marry this horrid Sherborne girl, he is to have nothing; but if she refuses, she is to have a hundred a year, and all the property when Tom dies. So it is a mere pretence to give the whole to her, that's all; for sickly and hard-wrought as Tom is, he can't expect to outlive a Sherborne."

"I tell you what I think of it," returned

Mr. Rathline, coolly, "and that is, that I wouldn't give Tom sixpence for his chance. So you see, since there is nothing to look forward to in the future, I must grab all I can in the present. I shall let the broker have all the traps in the house cheap—dirt cheap. It will be a sacrifice for me I know, but I can't help it. If I only had time, I could go to a fellow who would give me a fair price for them; but I haven't got time, so I must just put up with being cheated. It will be a good many pounds out of my pocket, Mrs. Rathline, that it will."

The hard blind brutality of the man spoke so plainly in this speech, that his wife, knowing him, perceived it would be vain indeed to ask for pity. He took the power the law gave him, with a selfishness too obtuse to understand its cruelty, and its injustice. What was his wife's was his, and he could do what he liked with it; that was the law, and it appeared to his mind an equitable state of things. He was in his right, and there was an end. He even thought himself very generous, when, at Alice's intercession, he left her mother her bed, and the stiff chair in which she sat rocking herself to and fro in silent misery.

There are depths of woe, unsentimental, unpoetical, unromantic, which the pen shrinks from touching. They do not tell well in a story, they are too real, too horrible and harrowing, there-

fore I leave undescribed all that wretchedness, which the triumphant Mr. Rathline quitted with a careless whistle, when, with fifteen pounds in his pocket, he wished his family an affectionate good-bye, and left them to the four bare walls of their dismal dwelling.

CHAPTER XIII.



JUSTICE Pydar called vainly at Castle Crehylls. Mr. Lanyon was too ill to be seen.

"So we must wait, I suppose," observed the gentleman, testily, "until he is well enough to tell us, in whose custody the child quitted St. Eglon's Hut."

"I presume you must," replied Maurice, gravely. Upon which the justice departed, fuming and irate.

In deference to Lord Crehylls' earnest entreaty, Mr. Pellew had given Mr. Pydar this answer.

"Don't tell that meddling old man anything," he had said. "It is better to wait until Mr. Lanyon can explain things himself. And, meanwhile, if there is a legacy left to Madeline, it wont run away."

With this view of things Maurice for a time acquiesced, but there was an irritable feeling in his mind which the courtesy of his host could not soothe. The words Lord Crehylls had used

in speaking of and to Madeline had galled him deeply, and out of this irritation there grew a sort of feverish resolve to set the name of Sherborne right with the world. He had looked at this vaguely at first, as a thing within the bounds of possibility ; now, he grasped the idea more closely, and began to examine the probabilities of success. The hawkers!—with him surely lay the solution of the great question of Walter Sherborne's guilt or innocence ; for this man then, he must search, and although, after such a lapse of time, the chance of discovering him might seem faint, yet perseverance and patience would in the end track him down. Never had a man disappeared so completely ; never had a man quitted a country, leaving behind him so small a vestige of his presence as this man had. The fact in itself was suspicious. It was noteworthy also that the few who remembered him spoke of him as a sharp dealer, crafty and smooth in his talk, yet of a hasty temper. Fond of money too, and acute at a bargain, yet he had never claimed the many little debts still owing to him by the farmers' and miners' wives, and daughters. Such a man must have a very cogent reason, if he were still alive, for never returning to gather in these sums. Surely, nothing short of some strong fear for his own personal safety, would deter a greedy trader from seeking to recover his gains.

Thus Maurice argued, after spending two days in random inquiries among the inhabitants of the hills, and dales around Crehylls. Madeline's close attendance on Mr. Lanyon had left him free to do this, for had she been with him, he felt such open questioning of the peasantry would have been impossible. It is not necessary to relate at present all he elicited during his inquiry; enough that it made him impatient to return to London. Mr. Lanyon was evidently too ill to travel for some weeks to come, so his visit to Penkivel must be deferred. He wished, however, that Madeline would return thither, for the coolness of Lady Crehylls towards her was now so perceptible that Maurice chafed at it, as indeed he did at the whole atmosphere of Castle Crehylls. The air was troubled around him, and there was a palpable unrest in the quiver of every breath, there was a shadow to be felt, not described, which brooded over the heart like the presage of a storm. In this shadow they all sat day by day, and Maurice felt impatient to fling it off, saying within himself, that a frank and open quarrel would be better than this secret fear, this sombre silence. He told Madeline of his intention to return to London, adding his resolve to go round by Lymington, and see the solicitors of the late Mrs. Singleton, and ascertain the amount of the legacy bequeathed by her to her great-niece.

"I shall be glad to see you independent, Madeline," he said. "I do not like your position here."

"Nor I," she answered. "And after the cruel reproaches used by Lord Crehylls to his father-in-law, I would not have remained a day beneath his roof, if the duty and gratitude I owe to Mr. Lanyon did not imperatively force me to stay."

"Have you had any quarrel with Lady Crehylls?" asked Maurice, anxiously.

A deep flush crimsoned Madeline's face, and she replied, hastily, "No, I have scarcely spoken to her lately. She is a spoiled child, and I suppose there is some crumpled rose-leaf in her path at present, for she is strangely gloomy."

"Perhaps it is anxiety for her father," returned Maurice.

"I don't see why that should make her cool to me," said Madeline, "unless, indeed, she is jealous."

"Jealous!" exclaimed Maurice.

"Yes—of her father's regard. But she need not be," said Madeline, and her lips shook; "for Mr. Lanyon has no love for me. There are times when he can scarcely bear my presence."

Maurice could not believe this.

"It is only the whim of a sick man," he said. "And as for Lady Crehylls, can it be that she

knows who you are, and shares her husband's dislike to the name of Sherborne?"

Maurice should not have asked this question of Madeline, and he repented the thoughtless words the moment they were uttered. He saw the pain and bitterness on the proud face, though he could not see how her spirit shrank away from him, or how, in the solitude of her own soul she told herself that, with all things false around her, she had done wrong to accept his love.

"Lord Crehylls assured me to the contrary yesterday," she returned coldly. "He also entreated me to keep my name a secret still from his wife, telling me, with some very unnecessary apologies, that although he might bear the presence of a Sherborne himself, he would not ask Lady Crehylls to do so knowingly."

"He insults you," cried Maurice, biting his lip. "Madeline, will you leave this house with me, and permit me to place you in some other home until I can offer you one myself?"

"No," answered Madeline, steadily. "I will not be beholden to any man's charity—not even yours; and I shall not quit Castle Crehylls while Mr. Lanyon hangs between life and death. I have often been unjust and ungrateful to him, not understanding that what he had done for me had cost him so much. It is right now that I should bear for his sake the coldness of his

daughter, and the insults of his son. He has borne more for me than these."

"It is always a sense of justice that moves you," said Maurice, smiling, "even when you punish yourself by it, Madeline."

Madeline did not smile in return.

"Yes," she said, gravely; "whatever is just I can suffer patiently. Still it is hard for me, I confess, to remain here; and the kindest thing you can do for me, Maurice, is to put me in possession, as quickly as possible, of my aunt's legacy. This will, I hope, make me independent. Not that I intend to continue here until then. I shall go the instant Mr. Lanyon is better."

"And where will you go, Madeline?" asked her lover, anxiously.

"If Mr. Lanyon wishes it, I shall return to Penkivel. I owe him too much duty and gratitude to dispute his wishes," she said, calmly. "But if, as I think he will do, he sets me free from his strange adoption of me, and cares not whither I wend my steps, I shall then come to London."

With all her calmness, she could not hide the deep sorrow and wounded affection which spoke in these words.

"To come to London would be the best thing you could do," said Maurice, "both to prove your identity and to receive your legacy. But what reason have you, Madeline, to imagine that,

after befriending you all your life, Mr. Lanyon should be suddenly anxious to cast you off altogether?"

"I have no reason," she replied. "I have only my instincts, which tell me so. I feel that he will do it to please Lord Crehylls. I feel—I cannot tell you why—that neither he nor Mr. Lanyon himself could endure to have my true name known in this neighbourhood. Their pride shrinks from owning, that Walter Sherborne's daughter has been received beneath their roof as a lady, and an honoured guest. They shrink, too, from the acknowledgment of a long deception—a deception which the world, to whom they have introduced me, would be slow to forgive. If then, by letting Madeline Sherborne lose herself in the great wilderness of London, they can avoid all blame and all scandal, do you think they will not gladly do it?"

Maurice was silent. He felt that what she said was true. Mr. Lanyon, through kind motives, doubtless, had placed himself in an awkward position, and it would be pleasanter for him if Madeline left Cornwall, and only took her true appellation at a distance, where no one could identify Miss Sherborne with his beautiful ward, Miss Sylvester.

"Let us speak of other things, Madeline," said Maurice, abruptly. "I leave you to-morrow,

and that thought now swallows up all others. You will write to me often, Madeline?"

"Yes, I will write to you," she answered.

"And do not grudge me a kind word or two," continued her lover. "I shall need some assurance of your affection, Madeline, to convince me, when I am no longer with you, that this is not a dream."

"A dream!" she repeated. "Ah, Maurice, I feel it a dream even now, while you are here. When you are gone, I shall think of it as only the shadow of a dream. How can I dare hope to be happy?"

Her lips quivered, and her eyes filled with tears, but she yielded her hand passively to her lover's clasp, and strove to believe the cheering words he uttered; but there was a heavy foreboding at her heart which belied them even as he spoke.

The next day they parted; and as the coach went lumbering on through the day into the night, and from night into day again, Maurice sat silent, and pondered on many things. A few weeks ago, when this same coach had brought him to Crehylls, he had thought of Madeline as Miss Sylvester, Mr. Lanyon's ward—he had thought of her as possessing all the advantages which wealth, honour, and position give. One by one he had seen these defences torn down from her name; he had

found that for honour she had dishonour, for position, shame; and for wealth, poverty. Yet his love had borne the shock of all this, and more—it had borne to see, that in the shadow beneath which she lived, her nature, like a plant kept in darkness, had suffered blight. Mr. Lanyon, by forcing upon her the misery of a secret, and the pain of deception, had created around her a solitude in which her thoughts had grown morbid, and her spirit bitter. Seeing all this with clear eyes, there grew out of his love a tender pity and forbearance, which no other woman, nursed in happiness and prosperity, could ever hope to receive at his hand. Yet he could not deceive himself. He felt that with such a nature happiness was uncertain, and the shadow of a cloud coming between them might even now separate them for ever.

Arrived at Lymington, Maurice sought out the solicitor of the ancient Mrs. Singleton, and heard with dismay of the singular condition she had annexed to her bequest.

“Miss Sherborne will not marry Mr. Singleton,” he said, abruptly.

“But Mr. Singleton is an exceedingly honourable, high-minded man,” returned Mr. Brydges; “and I cannot see why the young lady should object to him.”

“For the very simple reason that she is engaged to some one else,” said Maurice.

The lawyer's countenance fell considerably.

"I am grieved to hear that news," he said. "I fear it will be a sad blow to Mr. Singleton. He was here a day or two ago, and expressed a hope that Miss Sherborne would be found, and that she would prove a genteel young person whom he could like."

"A genteel young person whom he could like!" echoed Maurice, in indignation. "Really, Mr. Singleton is making a great mistake when he talks of Miss Sherborne in this way. What insufferable impertinence!" he added to himself.

"There was no offence meant, I assure you," replied the lawyer. "Mr. Singleton is a very inoffensive young man; and, considering his position, it was not strange that he should express himself with anxiety respecting Miss Sherborne. You see the will is made in every way in her favour. Old Mrs. Singleton, during her last years, was touched by remorse for her refusal to succour her niece, and she wished to make her some reparation; but in doing this, she has been somewhat unjust to her nephew."

"I don't perceive that," said Maurice.

"When you understand the matter better, sir, you will," responded Mr. Brydges. "Mr. Singleton was brought up as his aunt's heir, and had every expectation of inheriting the whole of this fortune. Now he finds he cannot even have the half, unless he takes a wife who may

not suit him,—and if the lady refuses him, a thing Mrs. Singleton never anticipated,—he will be completely disinherited.”

“Miss Sherborne certainly will not marry Mr. Singleton,” cried Maurice, chafing considerably at the mere idea.

“Then all I can say, sir, is, that the will is a very unfortunate one for him,” resumed Mr. Brydges. “And the more so that his circumstances are very sad. His mother made an unhappy second marriage; her husband was a showy, fine-looking man, but he turned out a thorough scamp. He deserted his wife and children, after spending every penny she possessed, and Tom Singleton has maintained them ever since out of his small salary as a clerk in a London bank. His father left a very good property, but, unluckily, he bequeathed a life interest in it to his widow, and this her husband has sold and mortgaged to the last halfpenny. Our firm looks after Mr. Singleton’s interest, but while his mother lives, we can of course do nothing to help him. But we can speak highly of his honour and integrity. Miss Sherborne will be acting most cruelly, and without reason, if she refuses to fulfil her aunt’s wishes.”

“She is the best judge of her own happiness, sir,” replied Maurice, stiffly.

“You will put us in communication with Miss Sherborne, sir, I hope?” said Mr. Brydges.

"Certainly," returned Maurice; "but not until I have first consulted her wishes."

"It is a pity there should be any delay," continued Mr. Brydges, with a perplexed air. "You perceive, sir, the law will make delay enough. Miss Sherborne must fully prove her identity. We shall require the certificate of her birth; we have searched the churches here for it in vain, and in fact, on Mr. Singleton's behalf, we shall exact undoubted proofs that Miss Sherborne is the person she represents herself to be."

"You shall have the proofs," said Maurice, shortly. "Will you inform me what is the amount of the fortune left by Mrs. Singleton?"

"About twelve thousand pounds, invested in the funds," returned Mr. Brydges. "Nothing, you see, very enormous, yet a great deal under present circumstances to Mr. Singleton."

Maurice sighed; he had hoped the sum was smaller. He had wondered whether he could compensate the hard-toiling young man for the loss of Madeline, but he saw now that that idea was hopeless.

"Have you any objection to give me Mr. Singleton's address?" he asked.

"I might answer you that I would consult his wishes first," returned Mr. Brydges, smiling; "but I will not. I will give you his address

frankly, knowing, as I do, how anxious he is to hear some news of his cousin."

"And here is my address," said Maurice, as he handed him his card. "I assure you if for the present I withhold Miss Sherborne's, it is in deference to the wishes of those who have befriended her during her deserted childhood. She felt bound to obey them, otherwise she would have written to you at once on seeing your advertisement."

Here the interview ended, and during the remainder of the journey to London, Maurice certainly found sufficient subject for unpleasant cogitation. With her peculiar views of justice, what would Madeline say to this will? How would she act when she found her engagement to him virtually disinherited Thomas Singleton?

And he, not a man rich, and in no necessity, but a hard-working, striving clerk, maintaining a sickly mother and three half-brothers and sisters. Would she bear to disappoint them, and plunge them into misery? She, whose severe notions of justice had so often startled him, would she accept her own happiness now, at such a cost to them?

Maurice trembled as he asked himself the question. Then again his courage revived as he remembered that she loved him, and she owed him a duty too, which neither honour nor justice would permit her to ignore.

"But I will tell her the whole truth," he said; "I am bound to do that."

Accordingly, he was no sooner at home than he indited her a long letter, in which he gave her the fullest details of his interview with Mr. Brydges. This done, he set off in a hackney coach for that dull, dismal suburb, and the small row of mean houses, wherein resided Thomas Singleton and his mother.

We have already visited that uninviting spot; but its aspect was forlorn indeed when Maurice stepped within the four bare walls and confronted the sickly woman, and the three hard-faced children. He glanced round the empty room and took in all its misery; then his eyes fell with deepest pity on Mrs. Rathline's wan looks and trembling hands, quivering feebly over their work. Next he gazed upon the children seated on the floor; and then he started in sudden amazement, for he saw the queer oblong box they were using for a table was a hawker's knapsack.

CHAPTER XIV.

N prosperity, when every material comfort surrounds the body, and ease, and luxury, and elegance are such daily accompaniments of life, that no note is taken of them, and they are received as carelessly as the blessings of sleep and sunshine, the mind, clogged by all this honey, grows fretful, and exaggerates small evils till they swell to great misfortunes. It is then that "the grasshopper is a burden," the day a weariness, and the night a woe. It is then that a real sorrow falling upon the weakened soul shatters strength and courage, and lying in the dust, it lets the wheels of time and fate go over it, crushing it into helpless despair.

Perhaps Lord and Lady Crehylls had been too fortunate. All good gifts, all pleasant things, had been theirs, till maybe they had learned to deem happiness their right, and if they had thought of human grief, it was only as a dim, uncertain shape, from whose fiery touch they were exempt. Hovering now over the tranquil sea of their content were two shadows, beneath

which the quiet waves grew troubled. And yet these shadows were but one, and that one—Madeline.

Hitherto Lady Crehylls had found loving hands to remove every roughness from her path—hitherto her sky had been untroubled; it was not strange, then, that her father's illness, and the slight coldness between herself and her husband weighed upon her heavily, and seemed to her unaccustomed heart burdens harder than she could bear. How sharp the shadows are in sunshine we all know, it is in the sombre day we scarcely heed them; and there are lives so bright that if the quivering of a leaf do but let fall a shadow on their path, they shiver, and cry aloud for pain and fear.

“If only my father were well, that I might ask him for those letters of Geoffrey's,” sighed Lady Crehylls to herself, as she sat by his bedside. “I know I should be happier if I read them. This foolish suspicion would die away, when I found they were only letters written to a child.”

Meanwhile the estrangement between husband and wife grew wider. Lord Crehylls was in a gloomy and irritable mood. It was an infinite annoyance to him, that one of these Sherbornes—people whom he had striven to put out of his memory for ever—had like a shadow been constantly at his elbow. That a Sherborne

should be beneath his roof, that a Sherborne should sit at his table, and pry into his face, and listen to his words, and he be in ignorance of her presence, vexed him like a thorn in his side. He looked on the deception Mr. Lanyon had put on him in an ugly light, and hated its aspect. This sense of wrong which he cherished against his father-in-law, deepened the shade of coolness and silence between him and his wife.

"I cannot complain to Agatha of her own father," he said to himself, "especially while he is ill ; and in fact I cannot have any explanation with her, while Madeline is here. I sicken at the thought. I must wait, till the girl has gone out of our sight for ever, before I can speak."

Thus he held his peace from day to day, although he saw his wife's face pale, and her eyes heavy ; and all this while he treated her with that tenderness and kindness which says so plainly, "I will do all things for you, except the one thing you wish—I will not open my heart to you. I will talk to you on all subjects, except that single one on which you desire me to speak, and on that I have laid a seal you must not touch."

Without a word being said, Lady Crehylls understood this perfectly. If she but drew near Madeline's name, she felt that her husband surrounded himself with a barrier of ice, which she dared not pass, or she saw him rise and walk

away abruptly. It was in vain, after this, that his voice took a tenderer tone in addressing her ; vain that he showed her some lover-like attention, which at a happier time would have brought to her lips a ready smile of thanks ; it seemed to her now a deception, and she turned away with grave sorrow in her eyes, or anger unspoken trembling on her lips.

Lady Crehylls had not the least idea that she was jealous. Jealousy comes to its victims in so many shapes, that perhaps it was not singular she did not recognise the fiend. And it was less likely still that Lord Crehylls should discover the fact that his wife was jealous, of all women in the world, of Madeline Sherborne ! And yet apparently Lady Crehylls had cause. Why did she so often find her husband and Madeline conversing almost in whispers, and why when she came did the conversation stop suddenly, while all her nerves felt jarred by the air of mystery around them ? Nor was this all. Madeline surely discussed some secret too with her father, for when she entered his room she found his face flushed, and heard the quiver of his eager voice ; yet here also her presence brought silence and embarrassment, and the same barrier of reserve like a wall reared itself between her father's heart and hers, as between her and her husband. Who had a right to the love and confidence of these two men, she or

Madeline? Were they her father and her husband? or were they bound body and soul to this strange girl, this interloper, who had stolen into their affections with a crafty and quiet step? Such questions as these coursed through Lady Crehylls' brain like a fire, and she began, with the impatient misery of a first grief, to fret for an opportunity to utter her wrongs. Was not this castle her own home?—was she not mistress here? Why then, should she bear the presence of a woman, who destroyed her happiness so cruelly? Was she so powerless, that she could not show Madeline Sylvester that she was an unwelcome guest? No, surely not. This power at least was left her, and she would use it at once. And from the hour that Lady Crehylls made this resolve, she treated Madeline with a studied coldness and reserve, most galling to a girl of her proud and bitter nature. She little knew what she was doing. Before this Madeline had looked upon her own dull, inactive dislike of Mr. Lanyon's daughter as a feeling she ought to quell, an injustice which Agatha did not merit. Now all was changed; she considered her dislike was justified, and she counted her childish instincts truer than her womanly reason.

“Have you told your wife who I am?” she said to Lord Crehylls one day, almost a week after Maurice's departure.

"No, indeed," he answered abruptly. "I should be sorry to do that."

Madeline steadied her trembling lip, and then turned towards him resolutely.

"Then may I ask why she treats me with studied insult? Is it by your orders?" she demanded.

Lord Crehylls looked pained and surprised.

"Do you suppose me capable of laying such a command on her?" he said in an angry tone.

"I see and feel every hour in the day," returned Madeline, "that her manner towards me is full of marked coldness, and I imagine of course that her husband sees this also, and approves of it."

"You do me the honour to make a great mistake," replied Lord Crehylls, with stiff courtesy. "I hope I am incapable of rudeness to any guest beneath my roof."

"Even a Sherborne," said Madeline, mournfully. "Lord Crehylls, you can understand how painful it is to me to remain here; surely, then, it is a rudeness to add to that pain, by showing me relentlessly how unwelcome I am."

"I am sorry any one has done so," returned Lord Crehylls, with the same cold politeness. "But I do not disguise from you, Miss Sylvester, that I shall be glad when Mr. Lanyon will con-

sent to your departure. Your stay here is not adding to the happiness of Lady Crehylls and myself."

Madeline grew very white; she had scarcely expected this. As Miss Sylvester—as Mr. Lanyon's ward, Lord Crehylls hitherto had treated her with every deference and kindness. Now he was coolly telling her to leave his house, and this change she imagined she owed more to Lady Crehylls' dislike than to his knowledge of her true name.

"If you cannot guess what it has cost me to do my duty to Mr. Lanyon in remaining here," said Madeline, with mournful pride, "then I will not tell it to you. Only, you must surely know that it is at his request—almost delirious entreaty—that I have stayed."

"I am fully aware of that," replied Lord Crehylls, stiffly. "I can only repeat I am sorry your stay is so painful."

"I am sorry Lady Crehylls has made it so," answered Madeline, with burning cheeks. "It was to nurse her father and to soothe him I remained. That thought ought to have gained me her consideration and kindness, but it has weighed as nothing with her. By his bedside, as elsewhere, she has treated me in the same cold way. If this is due to my unhappy name, it is cruel; but if, as you say, she is ignorant of

that, then it is insulting, and I shall demand an explanation."

"A man is bound to take his wife's part, even if she be in the wrong," said Lord Crehylls, in a softer voice; "but I assure you, Miss Sylvester, Agatha's behaviour is as much an enigma to me as to you."

"It shall not remain an enigma to me," returned Madeline. "I must and will know the cause of it. And since I hate deceptions of all kinds, I shall be glad, Lord Crehylls, to speak to her openly. I want to tell her who I am. I am anxious she should know that it was by her father's wish——"

Lord Crehylls here interrupted her eagerly, and said, in a firm voice, "No, Miss Sylvester; I must entreat you to do nothing of the kind. I hold you to your promise. I would not let Agatha know anything of this for the world."

He stopped abruptly, for standing at the doorway, with face white as snow, was Lady Crehylls herself.

"What is the secret you would not let me know for the world?" she said, in a forced voice.

"If it is a secret, it is evident you are not to know it," said Lord Crehylls, trying to laugh. "It is a new greenhouse I am going to build for you, Agatha."

Madeline walked silently from the room, and

Lady Crehylls followed her with eyes half scornful, half tearful.

"Don't trouble yourself to tell falsehoods, Geoffrey," she said, suppressing her tears. "I know perfectly well you were not talking to that girl of greenhouses."

"That girl!" repeated Lord Crehylls. "I wish, with all my heart, Agatha, you would be more civil to Madeline. You are not treating her well. She has complained to me of your rudeness."

Poor blundering Lord Crehylls, how fearfully he increased the breach by this blind remark!

"Has she dared complain of me to you?" exclaimed his wife. "And have you listened to her? Geoffrey, this is too much. Madeline Sylvester must leave Crehylls at once."

"Are you mad, Agatha?" cried her husband, in dismay. "You cannot treat your father's ward in this manner."

"She is a wicked girl," said Lady Crehylls, bursting into tears. "I shall tell my father so. She and I never liked each other as children. She has a hard, cruel, designing nature."

"I don't see it," said Lord Crehylls, a little drily. "She has had more to suffer than you dream of, Agatha. You are unfair to her. She is going away soon. Be at least civil to her for the short time she remains here."

"You demand too much in asking that," returned Lady Crehylls. "I cannot be a hypocrite. As I feel towards her, so shall I act."

"I don't perceive what cause you have to feel unkindly towards the girl," continued her husband, gazing pertinaciously out of the window. "I only know she complained very bitterly to me of your manner, and I should like you to alter it. I don't often find fault with you, Agatha, but I must say, I consider it unfair to bully the poor girl, just because she remains here against her will, to nurse your father."

Lord Crehylls took Madeline's part because he was conscious that he had been ungracious to her himself, and he would willingly have seen his wife make amends to her for this; he was utterly ignorant that his words to Lady Crehylls were as barbed arrows quivering in the flesh. He waited a moment for an answer, and finding utter silence, he looked round and found she had quitted the room. The sudden silence and emptiness sank down upon his heart, and a strange chill fear ran through all his frame. His wife's tears had hurt him, yet he had hidden his pain under a careless manner. Feeling he could not be frank, he dared not speak soothingly to her, lest he should betray the irritation of his own thoughts, so he had held aloof from

her sorrow, and spoken coldly. Now she was gone, he wondered at himself.

“Is the name of Sherborne always to be a curse to me?” he said, bitterly. “What madness possessed Mr. Lanyon to bring this girl here?”

CHAPTER XV.



HAVE a letter from Maurice," said Madeline, bending over Mr. Lanyon's pillow. "Shall I tell you what he says?"

"Read it, my dear," he answered, feebly; and the hollow eyes looking into hers grew feverish and restless with a strange excitement. Then Madeline read, in that calm, quiet voice peculiarly her own, the history Maurice had written of his visit to Lymington, and all he had learned there respecting Mrs. Singleton's will. Mr. Lanyon listened to every word with an intent earnestness, not interrupting her once, till with deliberate fingers she had refolded the letter, and laid it on her lap.

"A hundred a year," he said, looking eagerly in her face; "is it worth while, for the sake of that small sum, Madeline, to blazon abroad your name, and quit all the ease, and honour, and comfort of your present position?"

"It is worth while," answered Madeline, "because it will be independence and truth. There

is no honour, no comfort, in my present position ; it is false and full of misery ; and I am insulted every hour."

"Insulted," said Mr. Lanyon, and his worn face was lighted up with sudden anger. "Who dares insult you?"

"Your daughter," returned Madeline. "And your son, Lord Crehylls, has just told me to quit his house. Can you part with me? Will you let me go to-morrow? I am so miserable here."

"They are both mad!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon, in an excited voice; "mad and ungrateful. I have suffered too much for them. They are bound to obey me, and they shall."

"Calm yourself," said Madeline, quietly. "You shall not quarrel with them on my account, neither will I consent to remain here on sufferance, even at your petition. If you wish it, I will return to Penkivel to-morrow, although I would rather go to London."

Mr. Lanyon looked into her pale, resolute face, and seemed to feel that it would be useless to expostulate further.

"I am grieved you should leave me, Madeline," he answered; "no one nurses me as you do." She stooped and kissed him, and he went on in a voice slightly tremulous,—“But I am better, and I will soon follow you to Penkivel. You must go there, Madeline, and postpone

your journey to London until I can accompany you."

"I will do as you wish," she said. "But these papers for which Maurice asks, can you give them to me? I should like to send them to him by this post."

"I have them in my desk," he replied. "Hand it to me, Madeline; here is the key on my watch-chain."

Madeline placed the old-fashioned, brass-bound desk on the bed, and took the key in her hand, scarcely looking at it; but as she stooped to put it in the lock, her heart gave a sudden bound, and her face grew white as marble. The small, strange, heavy-looking key was the exact counterpart of the one given to her by Michael Polgrain. But she uttered no exclamation. Remembering even at that moment of surprise, Michael's warning, she repressed the cry that sprang to her lips, and bending down her head to hide the whiteness of her face, she watched Mr. Lanyon as his weak, trembling fingers drew forth the papers for which Maurice had asked.

"I found them at St. Eglon's Hut," he said, "and seeing they were family papers—certificates of your parents' marriage and your baptism among them—I sealed them up, and have never opened them since. You had better forward them to Maurice at once, my dear."

She took the packet mechanically, but her

eyes were riveted on the desk, and her spirit was in a dream. One of those swift revelations of memory had come back to her, which spring upon us at times from the forgotten past at sight of some old relic, dimly familiar, disused perchance and broken now; yet, as it stands before us, dragged irreverently into view, it speaks with the passionate voice of youth, or the innocent laughter of childhood, and its very dust seems sacred in our tearful eyes. Thus, at sight of this desk, as it lay open before her, Madeline saw herself at St. Eglon's Hut a child, standing by her father's side, eager and curious, while he was showing her the trick of a secret drawer lying below these yellow, faded papers. But while she gazed and wondered, Mr. Lanyon closed the desk and locked it, and placed the key again beneath his pillow.

"You cannot marry this young Singleton, Madeline," said Mr. Lanyon as he did this.

"No," she answered, with eyes still fixed and dreamy. "No; that will be impossible."

"Doubtless he is in every way beneath you," continued Mr. Lanyon—"will you put back the desk, Madeline?—and I dare say he will be quite satisfied if you give up to him the hundred a year, which your aunt bequeaths to you."

"But I have no intention of giving it up to him," she answered, taking the desk in both her

hands. "I want it for myself. It is mine, and I shall keep it."

"As my daughter," said Mr. Lanyon, "and living with me at Penkivel, you will want nothing, Madeline, till Maurice Pellew makes you his wife, when you will go to him with a fortune befitting the education, and the position I have given you."

Madeline had laid the desk on a little table near the door, out of the sick man's sight, and now, as he uttered these generous words, her heart smote her painfully, and she turned back to the bedside.

"I will not wait—I will speak now," she said to herself; "for I leave him to-morrow, and who can say when we shall meet again? We will talk of this legacy another time," she said aloud, "when you are well enough to bear it. I want to tell you now, before I go away, how sorry I am for all my hardness and pride. I want to tell you that I am grateful, though I have not appeared so. I want to tell you, that if I have not shown you all the love held so silently in my heart, it is because I have thought you have not cared to see it, and I have feared to weary you. But I will not leave you in sickness without saying, that you are dearer to me than any one else on earth. And through all my pride, and passion, and sullen misery, I have loved you as a child loves a father. I have not

been so wicked, so hard, so unloving as you thought."

"Madeline! Madeline!" cried her sick and woful listener, stretching out his hand to grasp hers—"I never thought so cruelly of you, my dear child."

"And whatever may happen in the future to part us," continued Madeline, a little feverishly, as she bent her head till her cheek touched the hand she held, "I want you always to think of me as loving you. If you have ever thought the contrary, forget that now, and remember me only as you have seen me since your illness—repentant, remorseful, and grateful."

"My dear, I will think of you as you wish," said Mr. Lanyon. "But we shall not be parted long; I shall soon follow you to Penkivel. It is strangely cruel in Agatha——"

He stopped, looking at her pitifully, as though begging her to spare him the pain of blaming his daughter; but Madeline took no heed of this mention of Lady Crehylls.

"As for me," she said dreamily, "wherever circumstances may drive me, or whatever fate may impel me to do, I give you this promise, that deep down in my heart I will keep my love for you intact. It is the best and purest feeling I have," she added mournfully; "for, Heaven knows, amid all this blight and wrong, my soul

has suffered mildew, and it has grown full of evil spots."

There was a little bitterness in her voice, but it died away in the last words, and she stooped and kissed him tenderly.

"Heaven bless you! my dear," murmured the old man. "But this is not a good-bye. I shall see you again in the morning. You must forgive Agatha and Geoffrey, Madeline. They are spoiled children, blinded by too much happiness. You must not be angry."

"What does my anger matter?" she asked, "or their unkindness? Let the son and daughter do what they may, I shall always remember their father was my dearest friend on earth, the dearest friend I shall ever have."

With these words she was gone, lingering a moment at the door to look again upon his face. Then she took the desk in her hands silently—it scorched them as she walked along—and went with a swift step to her own room. Here she closed the door and locked it, and placing the desk upon the floor, she sat down over against it, weeping bitterly.

"The dearest friend I have on earth," she repeated; "the dearest friend I shall ever have. And when I open this, perhaps he will be my cruellest enemy, or I his, and we shall behold each other face to face no more. Has the dead father, for whose sake I do this, ever done for

me what this man has?—was he as good, as tender, as wise a friend to me as this friend? Oh no, no, never. Oh, what shall I do? Where does my duty lie? Spare me, spare me, heaven.”

She flung herself down, with her face lying on her arm, that she might not see the hated desk, and thus resting motionless, there poured over her heart a thousand contending feelings. All her affection was with Mr. Lanyon—she owned it now; she could feel it here in her struggling bosom, which seemed rent with dry sobs. And this dead father, whose reckless, passion-scarred face she could dimly remember, seemed nothing to her, in comparison with the living friend, whose generous hand had plucked her from misery. What, if his motive, as she suspected, had not been all generous, all good, why should she seek to look too keenly into it, seeing the result to her was the same? Might she not let things rest as they were? Her action would rescue no one from shame and sorrow but herself; her father was dead, she could not help him; and if she were content thus, did it matter what secret lay hidden in the past? In London she could take her own name. Who would notice it there, or connect it with the dark story of St. Eglon's Hut? And her aunt's legacy would make her independent of all the world—no need to touch Mr. Lanyon's money, or bear the insolence of his children.

But with that thought there came a reaction, and there swept over her a flood of bitterness in which pride and courage sprang to life again, and all her weakness vanished.

She seized the desk, and drew it towards her with fierce eagerness, then paused again. What if it were Mr. Lanyon's desk, not her father's? Keys were often alike, and desks too. And if she mistook her right in opening this, how could she excuse the traitorous act? How could she ever avow that she had stolen Mr. Lanyon's desk, and with another key unlocked it to pry into his secrets? But as she asked herself this question, her heart sank, for there came with it, like a clear ray, a vision of her father's long, thin, womanish hand, showing her the trick of the secret drawer, and she heard his words again—"There is not another desk in England, Madge, like this one. It is an invention of my own, and I got it made by a poor carpenter, who, while he lives, will never get materials again to make another desk like mine."

Then Madeline rose up deliberately, and put the desk upon her knees.

"If I find this drawer," she said, "I shall know it is my father's; if not, I will not look at a single paper here, but I will shut the desk again, and carry it quietly back to Mr. Lanyon's table."

With that she turned the key firmly, and the

desk was open ; then she turned the key again, once, twice, thrice, and with a sharp click there sprang out against her hand a narrow drawer, from which there gazed up into her startled eyes the beautiful face of her mother. The miniature was set in gold and gems, and on the back, beneath a crystal, lay a long coil of bright brown hair, on which there rested, in small diamonds, the monogram " M. S."

Madeline took the picture in her hand, noting all this rapidly, then she gazed for a moment on the lovely features, which seemed to smile at all the woe and misery they had made, and with a sigh she set it down again, hiding the face. The next instant she held between her trembling fingers a sealed letter, addressed " To Madeline, my daughter ;" and here her courage failed her for a time, and rising, she placed the desk upon a table, and paced the room with a hurried step and eyes that blazed with a strange fever.

Falling on her knees, she broke the seal at last, and with the letter spread before her, she read it, still kneeling and faint with fear. And as she read, the veil that covered the past dropped from her eyes, and she saw her father, innocent and wronged, perishing in prison, while the man for whose guilt he had died, stood before the world unstained, unsuspected, rich, honoured, and happy.

Amazement and horror kept her silent for a

time ; then, with straining eyes, she read the letter again and again, slowly taking in the sense ; slowly believing the dreadful words, and realizing their truth, and more slowly still understanding her own terrible position.

An avenger ! Great heavens ! what was she called upon to do ? Must she denounce this careless, happy man, who hid his crime under a cloak of gaiety and laughter, and whose daily life, apparently so open and kindly, made him a favourite with rich and poor ? Why, the first word she spoke against him would slay Mr. Lanyon, as surely as though she pierced his heart with a sword. Who was Mathew Carbis, that she should deal such death and misery around her to avenge his traitorous blood ?

Alas ! it was not his blood—it was her father's. And seizing the letter again, Madeline fixed her eyes on it in agonized silence, shivering in every limb. All the joy she had thought to feel seemed dead and cold ; it sank lifeless before the pain and horror which chilled her veins. Then, as though it were a relief to break the blank silence quivering breathlessly around her, she read the letter aloud, in a low and trembling tone, listening to it, as if it were another's voice she heard, and not her own.

“ Madeline,”—so ran the letter,—“ I have been told to-day that Mathew Carbis has been found in the wood slain. They suspect me, it seems.

Now, whatever may happen to me, mark this, child: I never touched the man; my hand never struck him. I saw him lying by the brook-side, and lifted him; then—whether wisely or unwisely, I know not—I left him. I neither hated the man nor loved him; and I know your mother's heart too well to be jealous of Mathew Carbis. She adores wealth and rank; she has fled from her home, and I pledge my life she is gone with no poor man. Who quitted this place on the same day she did? Ask that, and when you hear the answer, judge for yourself. Ask, too, who was most jealous of Mathew Carbis—he or I? Or, stay: let the letters I have found in your mother's desk answer that question. They speak in no uncertain words: they ring with as mad a passion as ever was felt by man. People say he is a boy: at eighteen we are not boys; and, boy or not, he can give this fair, false woman all the luxuries and gauds she loves. I do not say they are gone together; Mr. Lanyon is too watchful for that; but they will meet abroad, and live abroad, hoping for my death.

“Mr. Lanyon has hated me from the first—remember that always, Madeline. Twenty times he has asked me to leave St. Eglon's Hut. But I had the law on my side, and so refused him carelessly enough. Then he tried to bribe me; and, that failing, he used threats. When it came to these, I swore I would remain till the

last hour of my seven years' lease was run. You see I was careless then; I did not believe my wife so lost, that she would listen to a boy. When Carbis came, he taught me better—he showed me the truth. I say this to do him justice, though I never liked the man; and then I was half sorry I had not left St. Eglon's Hut. But mark the selfishness, Madge, of this man Lanyon from the beginning. He only feared for his ward, the young lordling. It was to save him, that I, a poor man, ruined in purse and in happiness, was to leave the home I had found down here, and shift about, penniless, from place to place, from misery to misery. What was that to him, so that Geoffrey Crehylls was free from the wiles of the gambler's wife?—that was the name he gave me; and your mother's name, your mother's honour, were nothing to him either. His tongue has been the busiest in uttering the lying slanders spread here of her and Carbis. This, too, is done, to shield the young lord from blame, and more than blame—from suspicion of the truth; and if my blood be needed to save this silly youth, Mr. Lanyon will take it ruthlessly. I am poor and defenceless, wrecked in character and in fortune; he is rich and powerful, and all men speak well of him. If he fastens this murder on me, and says, 'Walter Sherborne did this deed,' all the country round will cry the same. Gaping peasant, drunken

squire, and ignorant justice, all will follow the great man's lead. Only let him point a finger at me, and I have no more chance for my life than if I were wrecked in mid-ocean, clinging to a straw for my only stay. Who will dare to speak a gentle word in behalf of a bankrupt stranger, when the owner of Penkivel, and the master of Crehylls—he is master there—is his enemy, and has sworn that he shall die?

“Oh, I understand it all. I see through his tactics for years to come. He means to marry his silly, soft-eyed daughter, to the young lord; and to gain that noble end, he would crush many a better man than Walter Sherborne.

“Madeline, you are a child now, but when you read these words you will be a woman. Then I call upon you to avenge me. If it be possible, I will plant you in the house of my enemies to be to them a firebrand for ever. Remember my injuries and your own. Your mother has deserted us, and the brainless, passionate youth with whom she has fled, will return hither, in honour and wealth, to marry Agatha Lanyon, while she, dishonoured, miserable, and forsaken, will perish in some foreign land. Remember it, Madeline, and when you strike, strike home. And if the memory of your father's face ever returns to your young heart sorrowfully, call up with it the bitter truth, that Mr. Lanyon persecuted him to save Geoffrey Crehylls—accused

him of a crime he never committed, to save Geoffrey Crehylls—and if he tries and condemns me, he will do it to save Geoffrey Crehylls ; and this he does for the sake of his puny daughter, whom he loves to distraction. To insure her happiness he will make my child fatherless, her name a disgrace, and her history a blank.

“Alone and forsaken of all, I write this by your little cot, Madeline, where you lie sleeping unconsciously ; and perhaps when you read it you will wonder why, foreseeing my fate, I did not flee. My dear, Mr. Lanyon’s spies surround me at this moment, and the people on every side are his slaves. Moreover, I confess it ; I do not care for life. For me the play is played out ; and if, in a grim farce and pretence of justice, these men finish the drama with a trial, which will be to me a mockery, I shall laugh, and laughing, die and escape them. They will not hasten my death one hour. Betrayed and deserted, reckless and half mad, I have resolved to ‘shuffle off this mortal coil,’ and leave a world in which hollowness and treachery follow us, even to the grave’s brink.

“Farewell ! little one. I do better for you in dying than I could in living. And I leave you this legacy—my innocence, my love, and my fame. If a day should ever come when you can do justice, do it in my name, remembering these are my last words—It was the hand of Geoffrey

Crehylls that struck down Mathew Carbis ! And if you suffer, and I suffer, it is because Aubrey Lanyon sacrifices us on the altar of his idol—his sickly child.

“ With a kiss upon your sleeping face, Madeline, I say farewell for ever ! ”

Madeline was weeping now, and she held the letter pressed against her bosom, clutched tightly with both hands, while her hurried steps went to and fro, taking her she knew not whither, for sorrow and fear had made her wild. This reading of her father’s words aloud had wrought a change in all her thoughts. It had made the great wrong done to him and herself a reality. Before she heard the dreadful letter, sentence by sentence, ringing in her ears, spoken out by her own voice, it had seemed to her a dream—a mad, impossible dream—a thing so untrue and wild that her love, running still in old grooves, settled wistfully on Mr. Lanyon’s age and sorrows, and on Lord Crehylls’ careless life, shattered and lying waste henceforth for ever. Now her sympathy ran feverishly to this poor lost man, her father, and holding the letter to her heart, it cried aloud to her for vengeance. No, not vengeance—justice, only justice—she would take nothing more.

The thought calmed her, and she sat down before the desk with her head leaning on her hand, and read—till her cheeks flamed with anger,

all the foolish, fond words,—all the boyish, passionate words which Lord Crehylls had addressed to her mother. Reading them with her father's jealousy hot upon her, they did not appear to her, as to Mr. Lanyon, the mere madness of a boy ; she saw only the unthinking passion, the blind adoration of a guilty love. She saw, too, the strongest, fiercest jealousy of this human snake, Mathew Carbis—a jealousy expressed in boyish threats, perhaps meaning nothing, but which, to her eyes, looked full of cruel death and murder.

All this she read, and folded the letters again with untrembling hand, half-smiling to herself at the folly in Mr. Lanyon, which had kept untouched these records of the guilt of his daughter's husband. Next, she searched beneath the faded papers for other proofs, and found a few blotted lines written by her father, and sent to Mr. Lanyon by the hand of Michael Polgrain.

“ You have taken my life,” he said, “ to save your intended son-in-law. I demand, in return for my blood, an asylum in your house for my child. I bequeath her to you ; and as you act to her, so may she reward you. Believing you will not refuse my last request, I die in silence. And if you would know what that means, ask of Michael Polgrain, who struck Mathew Carbis down, and then fled like a coward, to leave a brave man to die for him.

“One word more and I have done: vengeance sleeps, but it does not die. When all is most prosperous with you—when you have married the idol of your worldly heart to the man, for whom she pines in girlish ambition and sickliness, and all smiles in careless ease around you, then the blow will fall. And here, in prison, with the mist of death before my eyes, I see whose hand will strike it.

“I have nothing to leave my daughter, except a few family papers, useless to all but her. They are in my desk,—give her that when she is eighteen; and if you are generous, leave the lock untampered with and untouched till her hand opens it. If you do not succour my child, Michael Polgrain has promised me he will not be silent, though I am.”

The last words of this letter struck at Madeline’s heart with a double stab. In selfishness and fear Mr. Lanyon had given her an asylum, and to gain her this home, to insure her a refuge, her father had died, and “made no sign.” This thought brought to her spirit the terrible doubt that perhaps it was for her, her father had resolved to die, to give her this rich, prosperous home, and save her from poverty and all its suffering. The fear half-stifled her: a cry burst from her, a dreadful cry, and falling on her knees, she laid her white face upon the desk, and clenched her hands in frenzied anguish.

At that instant a hand knocked sharply at her door, and starting up, Madeline, in a strange voice, unlike her own, demanded who was there.

“It is I—Agatha Crehylls,” was the hurried, angry reply. “Open the door instantly, Miss Sylvester! You have taken my father’s desk from his room, and he is asking for it.”

CHAPTER XVI.

BEWILDERED and fevered by her new-born jealousy, Lady Crehylls had quitted her husband, bent on speaking to her father of her fancied wrongs. But after a burst of tears in her own room, when she came to his bedside and looked down on his pale, pinched face, she felt it would be cruel to pour her griefs into his weary ears now in his weakness, and she wisely held her peace. Still, it was intolerable that Madeline should dare complain of her to Geoffrey, and the rebuke he had administered, prompted, as it was, by her, rankled in her heart, firing all her veins with a dull, miserable pain. She was an only child, and ever since she could remember, her will had been a law to the household, and the love of her father and of her husband had been as a wall to her on either side, sheltering her from every sorrow. Were these beaten down now, and was she left alone and unsheltered in the cold world? Was her grief nothing? Were her tears to be looked at carelessly?—tears so precious once that these two

men, whose idol she was, would have given all the substance of their house to spare her the pang of this salt rain. Through indulgence, and love, and unchecked prosperity, her thoughts took a morbid cast, and she wept for self-pity long and bitterly. Her father's idolatry had weakened her; she was unfit for grief, and she broke down before it, like a flower without root. A woman less gentle, less timid, less generous by nature, would have grown hard and selfish under the indulgence of every fancy; but she only became more timid, more weak, more unfit to form a judgment for herself, or to take a single step in life without helping hands on either side. Thus, when the torment of jealousy struck her, her first feeling was amazement and terror. What! was there sorrow in the world for her, and no ready help at hand to take the burden instantly from her heart? She wanted to be soothed, caressed, comforted, and this sorrow lifted from her soul at once, as all other sorrows had been ever since her childish feet had run among the flowers. But there was no voice to comfort her, no hand to help her. Geoffrey was careless and changed, and she must not speak of her grief to her father, lest he should be too feeble to bear it. When he was well he would help her. Yet, in her impatient weakness, she felt she could not wait for this time, suffering as she was, and the thought struck her that she might look at those

letters of Geoffrey to Madeline, and so solve her doubts and find peace. By-and-by, when her father was well, she would tell him she had opened his desk, and he would excuse her. Indeed, the matter scarcely took, to her, the shape of an offence needing excuse. To her father all things she did were well done, and so would this deed be also. "I shall find a key somewhere to unlock it," she said to herself, as her eyes wandered round the room in search of the desk. Then she found it gone, and a suspicion that her husband had taken it struck at her heart cruelly.

"Father, I do not see your desk here," she said, trying to speak carelessly.

"My love, I had it a minute or two ago," he answered, "and Madeline put it back for me. You had better ask her where she has placed it. I don't like to miss my desk." No suspicion of the truth touched him.

"Has Madeline put it away?" exclaimed his daughter, as the instant conviction flashed upon her that the desk was now in her possession. Then she hurried from the room, thinking as she went, "Ah, those were no letters to a child. My father is deceiving me out of pity." And indignation roused her tones to unwonted anger as she clamoured at Madeline's door for admittance; but Madeline locked the desk deliberately, and placing it in her half-packed trunk, she locked that as well before she set the door open, and

looked straight into the pale, agitated face of Lady Crehylls. Madeline too was pale; but what a difference between the whiteness of her resolute face and the pallor of the timid woman, who, frightened at her own anger, stood before her half tearful and shrinking.

"Give me my father's desk, Miss Sylvester," she said, in a quick, nervous voice.

"I have no desk belonging to Mr. Lanyon," answered Madeline, stepping back to let Lady Crehylls pass, as she entered and gazed round the room with anxious eyes.

"Have you not taken it from my father's room?" she asked, in the same quick, angry way.

"I took what belonged to me, not to him," said Madeline. She could not help the contempt that rang out in her voice, or the scornful pity in her eyes. It was for the sake of this poor, weak, tearful idol, Mr. Lanyon had slain her father; it was for the sake of this weeping, whimpering woman that she, Madeline, had been forced all her life long to live beneath a lie, and hide her name as shameful, when there was no shame in it. To keep tears from the eyes of this poor spoiled, peevish child, Mr. Lanyon had basely put another's crime upon her father's head, and taught his daughter to hate him, and shudder at his memory.

With this great injustice binding her like an

iron chain, that eats into the soul, Madeline spoke those few words calmly, with a strength of bitterness impossible to describe, while her wounded heart, speaking in her eyes, made them wonderful for indignant sorrow.

"Yours!" exclaimed Lady Crehylls—"yours! Is that your answer? Why, my father has had that desk for years."

"And for years he has done a wrong, and kept it from its lawful owner," said Madeline. "It was my father's once, and, dying, he bequeathed it to me."

"I know nothing, and desire to know nothing of your father," returned Lady Crehylls, a little scornfully. "I have always been made to understand, that Mr. Sylvester was a person of whom it would be wise not to speak."

"It would be wise in you if you would be silent now," said Madeline, holding down her mighty anger like a rock held back in a giant's hand. "Shall I crush a shaking leaf?" she murmured to herself. "No—let me be just—she is not the criminal. When I strike I will strike the guilty."

"But I cannot and will not be silent," cried Lady Crehylls, bursting into a flood of pitiful tears. "I know there are letters of my husband's in that desk."

"I do not deny it," answered Madeline.

"Are you so daring?" exclaimed the wretched

wife. "I insist on your giving those letters to me."

"No, we are told even in justice to remember mercy," said her antagonist. "I will not give them to you, Lady Crehylls."

The unhappy lady started up wildly, wringing her hands together.

"You are afraid to let me see them," she cried. "They are addressed to 'Madeline'—'my beautiful Madeline.'"

"Again, I do not deny it," returned Madeline, calmly. "It is the least of your sorrows that they are so addressed, Lady Crehylls."

"You are shameful—you are infamous," cried the wife, in a voice rent by sobs.

For the first time during this passionate interview the colour rose into Madeline's marble face.

"Are you utterly mad, Lady Crehylls," she asked, "that you dare use this language to me? Do you know I hold your husband's very life in my hands, and if I do justice to myself, you will behold his face no more on earth?"

Lady Crehylls answered by a cry of dismay and anguish.

"Is it come to this?" she said. "Is your power so great over him? I will go to my father instantly—I will tell him all you have said."

"No," said Madeline, barring the way resolutely. "You will not do that, your words

would kill him. In spite of this great flood of bitterness there is still some remnant of old affection lingering in my heart, and I entreat you to spare him, as all his life long he has spared you."

Lady Crehylls looked at her wildly; blinded by her own jealousy, she understood nothing of her words but misinterpreted them all.

"Will you leave my house?" she said. "On that condition I will not speak to my father. One roof cannot cover us both."

"I am going to-night," returned Madeline, mournfully. "I am going almost at once. And if with this poor unwilling hand of mine I draw down utter wreck and ruin upon your head—if through me you and your husband are separated for ever, believe me, I cannot help it. Circumstances are too strong both for you and me. I told you so once. I say it again now with tenfold cause."

Madeline stopped, for Lady Crehylls had fainted, and lay on the ground white and senseless. She looked at her with a deep commiseration, which for a moment forgot all wrongs, then she turned resolutely away from the sad sight.

"I must do justice if it kills her," she said to herself. "It will be her father and her husband who will be her slayers—not I."

Then she called Lady Crehylls' maid, and saw her carried to her own room and laid upon the

bed, and, stooping over the insensible face, she laid her hand for one moment on her brow.

This was her farewell of Agatha Crehylls. In her superb pride and innocence, Madeline had never guessed at her jealousy, and many a sorrowful day passed away before she knew it.

Returned to her own room, Madeline sat down face to face with her grief; and, shrinking from the task before her, the thought came to her mind, that she ought to seek some other proof besides her father's letter. She would see Michael Polgrain and force him to speak; and, until she had had this interview, she would delay to strike. She would go and ask one of the servants where his sister's cottage was, and how far it was from the castle. Passing down the great staircase for this purpose, she saw Michael himself in the hall, a prisoner, with Lord Crehylls and four rough men standing near him.

CHAPTER XVII.



OME men from the coast-guard station wish to see you, my lord."

Lord Crehylls was reading, or pretending to read, and he looked up from his book with an expression of intense annoyance.

"What do they want?" he said, sharply.

"They have a prisoner with them, my lord," returned the servant, "and I believe they want to hand him over to the village constables to take him to Bodmin Jail."

"Let them take him there themselves, and be hanged," said Lord Crehylls.

The servant took a step towards the door, then stopped. "My lord," he said, "the prisoner is Michael Polgrain."

Lord Crehylls uttered an oath, and flung the book from him with an angry hand.

"I warned Michael of this a week ago," he cried. "Confound the fellow! Why couldn't he leave off smuggling?"

As he spoke he hurried out of the library and across the hall into the justice-room, where he

guessed the men to be. Here he confronted four rough, weather-beaten veterans of the Preventive Service, and, standing in the midst of them, the calm figure of Michael Polgrain, with dead-white face unmoved.

“My lord,” said the spokesman, pulling hard at a lock of gray hair which hung on his forehead, “there was a bit of a scrimmage this morning just afore sunrise, ’twixt two of our men and a boat’s crew of the darndest lot of smugglers on this coast, and they got clear off to their boat except this chap here, who seemed blinded-like by the sunrise, and so fell over a rock, and was cotched. You see the others were too many for us, and when they seed their comrade in our hands they were for coming back to fight for him; but sighting eight or ten of our men running down the path to the cliff to help us, they sheered off. And we’ve kept this here chap at the coast-guard all day, your honour—my lord; but our leftenant have heerd as how he’s the cap’en of the gang, and one of our spies has been round to tell us as they mean to attack us to-night to get ’un back. So his honour, Mr. Broad, our leftenant, sends him down to you, my lord, so as if you’ll be so good as to make out a warrant like for ’un, and put ’un safe in Bodmin Jail.”

“No,” said Lord Crehylls, shortly. “If your lieutenant yields him up from his own

hands into mine, I can tell him that I have no power to commit a man to prison unexamined, and with no charge brought against him."

"My lord, your worship," said the sailor, "the charge is, as we cotched him landing kegs of brandy on the shore. And Mr. Broad would lodge him in jail, as he've got a right to do, only he can't spare none of we to go. We've heerd from a sure hand, that the new craft, which this here man is master of," and he jerked his thumb at Michael, "is to be in a sartain cove to-night, and since most all the crew be coming up to attack we, why we means to give 'em the slip, and take that there craft easy. I don't mind saying this before him," he added, with another jerk of the thumb, "because why, you see, he's got the bilboes on, so he can't do no mischief anyhow."

Here a brother veteran nudged him on the shoulder.

"You've spun a long yarn, Joe," he remarked, grimly; "when you might so well have spared your breath, and let our cap'en's letter tell it hisself."

Thus admonished, the man wiped his forehead, in a burst of perspiration at his own forgetfulness.

"I'm darned if I remembered the letter," he observed confidentially to his friend. But producing it now with great difficulty from the tight

pocket of his tight trousers, he handed it to Lord Crehylls.

The letter contained merely a polite request, that his lordship would either send the smuggler on to Bodmin, or place him in safe custody for that night, as, from certain information he had received, he knew a rescue would be attempted, and as all his own men would be required on dangerous service, he could not spare any of them to guard the prisoner.

The intense irritation which Lord Crehylls felt betrayed itself in his tone and manner, as he turned towards the preventive man.

"I am not going to make my house a jail," he said, angrily. "Lieutenant Broad must look to his prisoners himself."

On hearing this, the men shuffled about, as uncertain what to do, and Michael Polgrain for the first time looked earnestly and pleadingly into his foster-brother's face. Lord Crehylls flushed deeply, and shook his head with an almost imperceptible movement.

"Some people will take no warnings," he said, hurriedly. "I have told the constables they ought to have a lock-up in the village; but since there is none there, I don't see what is to be done."

"I think the man would be safe enough in the strong room, my lord," observed an unexpected voice.

The speaker was Grylls the butler—a man who had been thirty years in the service of the Crehylls family, and was therefore privileged to speak. This remark secretly annoyed Lord Crehylls terribly, but he was unwilling to let the bystanders perceive his irritation. He was not a ready man in an emergency, not a man of strong will; essentially a fair-weather man, who in trial, in storm, or in danger, would break down weakly, and obey the first determined voice. Thus, while he hesitated, irresolute, the rough-and-ready sailor caught at once at the butler's offer.

"If you've a strong room here," he said, "it's all as one, as good most as the hold of a ship; and with the bilboes on, you see, he'll be harmless as a babby. So if his lordship's worship will give the word, we'll stow him away at once; and in the morning, when we've got all the rest of his crew in irons, we'll come and fetch him, and march 'em all off to Bodmin together."

"Dear me! now will you?" asked Grylls, with an innocent look of surprise. "How will you do that?"

The veteran, who was an infant of some sixty years, grinned delightedly, and winked at his companion Joe.

"My partner here can tell you," he said. "He's a better hand at a yarn than me."

"Well, it's like this here," observed Joe, com-

placently. "They leaves their craft with only two men and a boy aboard of her, while they all comes to shore to rescue their cap'en—Dead-eyes we calls 'un—and, meanwhile, we boards the craft, d'ye see? and takes her. Then, when the crew creeps back, we seize 'em as they come up the side, and clap the bilboes on 'em comfortable."

"A very capital arrangement," said Lord Crehylls, with a laugh, "if your commander can only carry it out; but I am afraid he takes too many into his confidence for that."

"I suppose, my lord," interposed Grylls, "the sailors can put this man in the strong room?"

It was noticeable that Grylls said "this man," as though Michael were a stranger to him, and the preventive men, who came from a station some dozen miles away, evidently concluded such to be the case. They were in perfect ignorance of Michael's connexion with the Crehylls family; and when Lord Crehylls had given his consent unwillingly to this disposal of their prisoner, they departed promptly, with a promise to return as early as possible on the following morning.

Grylls paced after his master to the library, and placed the key of the strong room on the table.

"It is a good thing, my lord," he observed, cheerfully, "that they brought poor Michael

here. I can let him out when it falls dark, and nobody will be the wiser."

"You will do nothing of the kind," answered Lord Crehylls, sternly. "Michael must take his chance; he has brought this upon his own head. I cannot compromise my name and honour by conniving at his escape. You can leave the room, Grylls. That is all I have to say."

"But, my lord," cried Grylls, excitedly, with a face of the utmost dismay, "Michael is your foster-brother, and there wont be a good word said of you for years to come if ——"

"Is it of Michael Polgrain you are speaking?" asked a calm voice.

It was Madeline's. She was white as marble, and as composed.

"Will you permit me to speak to him for a few minutes, Lord Crehylls?" she said. "I saw him led away prisoner just now as I stood on the staircase, and I wish earnestly to see him."

Lord Crehylls gazed at her in surprise.

"You make a strange request, Miss Sylvester," he observed. "May I ask why you wish to see Michael Polgrain?"

"When I have spoken to him it will be my sad duty to tell you," she answered.

As she spoke, Lord Crehylls noted the whiteness of her face, and that steadfastness in her demeanour which had something terrible in its

calmness, inasmuch as it covered an excitement deeper than any which can be evinced by agitation of manner.

"Miss Sylvester, you are not well," he said. "Let me advise you to sit down."

He offered her a chair, but as he approached her, Madeline drew back, avoiding him with a horror which she could scarcely repress.

"I am quite well. I wish to see Michael Polgrain," she reiterated, calmly.

"He is a very formidable fellow," said Lord Crehylls, with a nervous laugh, "a terrible smuggler, and all that sort of thing, you know—not the person exactly for a young lady to visit."

Madeline stretched out her hand towards the large key lying on the table.

"All that matters nothing," she said, mournfully. "Give me the key, Lord Crehylls."

"Really, Miss Sylvester, I am sorry to refuse a lady's request; but I don't see how I can. I am responsible for the man's safety, and, whatever it may cost me, I am resolved on delivering him up to-morrow morning to the authorities. It is horribly annoying; it is painful to me beyond expression; but I must do it. Much as I like Michael, it does not become me to sympathize with and aid a smuggler, a constant law-breaker."

Madeline listened and held down her impatience with an iron power; she even smiled,

half contemptuously, at Lord Crehylls' vacillation. It was so evident that he longed to set Michael free, yet could not justify the deed to himself, and so hid his weakness and his pity under a pretence of duty.

"Are you so hard against the law-breaker?" asked Madeline, with strange steadfastness. "Well, so am I; and I say that neither sorrow nor affection should hinder us from letting justice take its course. If Michael Polgrain is guilty, let him suffer the penalty of his guilt. I, for one, would not lift a finger to help him to escape. You can give me the key of his prison safely."

Her hard words startled Lord Crehylls. He did not heed their justice, he felt only their strength, and his slumbering affection for Michael aroused itself to defend him.

"I cannot allow that Polgrain is very guilty," he said. "Smuggling is popular; it suits the adventurous spirits of the Cornish. And all along the coast the people sympathize with the smuggler, and give him practical aid as well."

How Madeline listened to him, she knew not; how she held her agony silent, she could not tell; yet she did, and looking at him, she wondered at his puerile talk—she wondered he did not feel, and see the dreadful hand, which held the sword above his head.

"What does it all matter?" she asked, a little

wearily. "Lord Crehylls, I want to see Michael Polgrain on a subject of great importance to me, and when I have seen him, it will be my duty to tell you what this subject is. Will you give me the key?"

Again her aspect and voice struck Lord Crehylls as strange and unnatural, yet she stood before him so calmly, awaiting his decision, that he was deceived, and thought his fear a mere fancy.

"You are so earnest," he said, "that I yield to your request. Here is the key. Grylls will turn it in the lock for you; it is too heavy for your hands." But Grylls had long ago left the room, so Lord Crehylls went himself down the long passage, Madeline following him, and stopping before a stout door, iron-plated, he unlocked it, and admitted her to the presence of Michael Polgrain.

"You can wait for me," she said quietly, as she entered; "I shall not be long."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HE interview between Madeline and Michael Polgrain was, as she had promised, short, and as the heavy door turned again on its hinges, Lord Crehylls heard him say, "Don't talk of law, Miss Madeline, or of justice, but have mercy, as you hope for mercy yourself."

Madeline did not answer him, and she passed Lord Crehylls with a face so white and cold, that it seemed of snow or marble.

"Will you follow me to the library?" she said, bending her head to him slightly as she went by.

He had not time to reply before Michael had seized him by the hand.

"Let me go free," he whispered, eagerly. "In another hour or two it will be too late."

With a flush of vexation over all his face, Lord Crehylls withdrew his hand from Michael's grasp.

"My dear Michael, I really cannot," he said, angrily. "Don't distress me by another word. You will not change my resolution, so you only pain me and yourself."

Here, with an oath against the whole Preventive Service, Lord Crehylls would have closed the door, but Michael held it back with the strength of a giant.

"See here, my lord," he said, gently, "I have not stepped within your threshold for twelve years, and now I am in your house a prisoner. You will not keep me so?—you must not. You will be ruined if you do not let me go."

"I shall be ruined if I do," returned Lord Crehylls, with increased anger.

"You have often made it a reproach to me that I accepted no favour at your hands," said Michael, "and now I ask you one, you refuse me."

"I tell you, man, I cannot help it," cried Lord Crehylls, with infinite distress. "All I could do for you I did, when I had those cursed irons knocked off."

"Good Heavens!" cried Michael, "could you bear irons,—could you bear a prison,—could you bear a judge's sentence?"

"Hardly, Michael," replied Lord Crehylls, with a wistful smile.

"Neither shall you," returned Michael, with quiet strength; and at the same instant Lord Crehylls found himself on the floor, pinned there by Michael's sinewy hand. "Remember what I told you of the *Penkivel*," he whispered, eagerly. "Come to my sister's to-night."

With this he sprang down the long, unfrequented passage, and before Lord Crehylls could rise, he heard the slam of a distant door, which told him Michael Polgrain was free. His first feeling was infinite annoyance, then came a sort of rueful amusement at his own discomfiture, and lastly, a genuine sense of relief and pleasure at his foster-brother's safety.

"Half crazy as he is, Michael wont let himself be caught again," he said, as he went towards the library. "I expect he'll save that craft of his, the *Penkivel*, yet."

He entered the library with a half smile on his lips, but this was checked instantly as his gaze fell on Madeline. She was standing in the middle of the room, pale and steadfast, and in her outstretched hand she held an old faded letter.

"Is this your handwriting, my lord?" she said, calmly.

Even at this lapse of time he recognised the boyish scrawl,—it was one of the letters written to her mother, and all the agony of that sad passion, that youthful, mournful, mad love, struck at his heart again.

"How did you get that letter?" he asked, in broken accents.

"I found it, with many others, in my father's desk," she replied. "Lord Crehylls, I demand to know in what foreign land you left my mother to die."

He looked at her with face aghast and blanched to deadly whiteness.

"I know not what you mean, Miss Sylvester. I am in utter ignorance of Mrs. Sherborne's fate. You do me an injustice, and you do your mother a cruel wrong, when you make such a demand of me."

This was his answer; but it struck upon unbelieving ears, and Madeline's lip curled unconsciously with contempt and anger.

"I do not expect you to reply truthfully to such a question," she said, in her coldest tones. "I am a fool to ask it."

Lord Crehylls bit his lip, and a sudden colour rose to his face.

"If you were a man, Miss Sherborne,"—he gave her name unwillingly,—"I would answer you, and in a way very different to this."

"I am only a girl," she returned, "but you will find I am not without courage. Lord Crehylls, for many days past you have treated me like a criminal, or the daughter of a criminal, when, as you know full well, I am neither. I pass over that; and though I look on you as my bitterest enemy, I pass over that also. But for you my mother deserted her husband; for your crime my father died; and these things I will not pass over. Woman as I am, you will see I am not too weak to demand justice."

She walked to the door, but Lord Crehylls

sprang forward, and stood there first, barring the way.

"Of what do you accuse me?" he said. His face was colourless, his lips pale and trembling.

"I accuse you of the murder of Mathew Carbis," she answered. "I accuse you of cowardice and treachery double-dyed, inasmuch as you fled with the wife, and left the husband to suffer for your crime, and perish in your stead."

"It is false!" he cried. "On my life and soul, this accusation is false!"

Madeline looked into his shrinking face with withering contempt.

"Your life and soul!" she said. "What are both worth? What a lie your whole life has been! Fair-seeming, happy, careless, and prosperous, you have accepted homage from all the world, while your soul was black with guilt. I will unmask you to this blind world, Lord Crehylls. I will show these silly worshippers of rank and wealth, the true shape of the idol to whom they have bowed. All that is good and beautiful, true and pure, will leave you to the punishment you merit. Why, even now your wife lies weeping on her bed, struck senseless by only the faint hint I gave her of the truth."

"My wife!" repeated Lord Crehylls, in wild dismay. "What have you said to her?"

"Only this; that what I do, I cannot help

doing," said Madeline, and her voice dropped to a tone of anguish. "Lord Crehylls, save your life; that is all I dare say to you," she continued, vehemently. "I want justice, not revenge. The law would murder you, I wont. But neither will I let you remain here in the possession of every prosperity the world can give—that would be rank injustice, and I will not suffer it."

"Miss Sherborne," replied Lord Crehylls, "I cannot understand your words; they pass over my brain, and bring me no meaning. I once struck Mathew Carbis; I never killed him."

"No!" said Madeline, returning to her calm tone, half in scorn, half in bitterness. "And yet I come to you with no uncertain speech. I did not take the evidence alone of the reckless, injured, desperate man whom your deed drove to suicide—no! I went to Michael Polgrain, and asked him if the dreadful tale was true, before I dared bring against you an accusation, which drags you down to the lowest depths of misery and crime——"

She stopped, for there was a change on the face of Lord Crehylls, which appalled her. He seemed struck with some deadly fear, and staggering, he leant against the wall like a man seized with sudden sickness. Hitherto he had listened to her in amazement, and if his face was pale, it had not looked like the whiteness of

fear, but now on all his features there stood a stony terror, fixed and dreadful.

"What did Michael say?" he gasped forth in a faint voice. "What did you ask him?"

"I asked him if you had struck down Mathew Carbis in the wood of Crehylls, and he answered yes."

"But not killed him?" broke in Lord Crehylls, hurriedly.

"Killed him?" answered Madeline, steadily. "And you fled from England the same day. You know what happened next—you know by what a cunningly devised plot Walter Sherborne was made to suffer for your deed—you know that in three years, you returned hither unscathed to marry Agatha Lanyon, and live your free and careless life, while one victim lies in a felon's grave, and the other, if living, wanders an outcast in some foreign land."

As she ceased her face took an expression of disgust, and weariness and, loathing unutterable, and she turned her eyes from him with a deep shudder.

"You wrong me," said Lord Crehylls, hotly. "You have no right to judge me in this hasty way."

This roused her.

"Wrong you," she cried. "Do you dare speak of wrong to me—to the daughter of Walter Sherborne? Can you fathom the depth

of suffering you have inflicted on me from childhood to this day? No, you cannot gauge it. Free, easy, and careless man that you are, you have lived your selfish life without a thought."

"If all you say of me were true," he answered, "my life would indeed be selfish and careless."

Madeline did not heed him; her words swept over his words like the rushing down of many waters.

"You question my right to judge you," she said. "I assert I have a right. By all the wrongs heaped upon my father, by his despair and death, by his lost name, buried unjustly in infamy, I claim the right to be your judge. By all the sufferings poured upon myself; by all the bitterness, blight, and mildew hanging on me now; and by all the misery and shame beneath which my mother's life lies hid, I assert I have the right to judge you."

"Hear the truth first," cried Lord Crehylls. "I repeat I am innocent of the charges you bring against me. Your mother's face I have never seen since the day I quitted England; and if the random blow I gave Mathew Carbis killed him, Heaven knows I went away unwitting of the fact."

"Do you expect me to believe you?" returned Madeline. "Things look too black against you,

Lord Crehylls. And I have been deceived too long to believe anything a Lanyon, or a Crehylls can tell me now."

"Ah, Mr. Lanyon is indeed to blame," exclaimed Lord Crehylls, catching at her words. "If he knew the truth, he should have recalled me instantly. He should not have permitted an innocent man to suffer unjustly. As for me, if what you say be true, it was but homicide at the worst."

"Homicide!" repeated Madeline. "If it were that *then*, what is it *now*, when Walter Sherborne lies beneath the stones of a prison yard? I weary of these excuses, these shufflings of your crime on others. And as for Mr. Lanyon—I have been cheated into loving him, and he is old—I will spare him if I can."

For one instant her steadfast calm broke down, and she put her hand upon her eyes, wiping the tears hastily that sprang to them.

"Now, hear my resolve," she continued, steadying her voice into a cold, hard tone. "I am a girl, not afraid to do justice myself, young as I am; and my right here to do it is incontestable. I give you your choice of two things: Exile yourself for ever from England, and from home, or to-morrow morning I go to the nearest magistrate, and charge you with the murder of Mathew Carbis. Nor will this be the sole charge. I must denounce you and Mr. Lanyon

both, as guilty of a vile conspiracy, to fix the guilt of this crime on my father."

As she spoke, a tide of horror rushed over the heart of the young man who listened to her. He was essentially a weak man, not ready and prompt in an emergency, and sense and courage failed him now. The pain and shame of such a charge; the difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of proving himself innocent; the agony of his wife, the disgrace of Mr. Lanyon; all rushed over him in a grievous flood, drowning resolution and hope.

"How long a time will you give me to decide?" he asked, in a faint voice.

"Until to-morrow morning at eight o'clock," she said, firmly. "And I repeat, it is not my wish to give you up to the law—the laws of this land are murderous, they will slay you. And I do not forget I have eaten of your bread, and sat at your board. Cruel as you have been to me and mine, I do not desire your death, or the ruin of all you love—I am willing to spare them—above all, I am willing to spare Mr. Lanyon, and for his sake I would spare his daughter also."

Her voice broke, and ceased, leaving her lips apart and quivering.

Lord Crehylls was so shaken in soul, that he found no words in which to answer, but, bewildered and silent, he stood gazing at her in blank dismay.

“It is fair to myself,” she continued, rallying her strength and speaking with inexpressible pathos, “that I should tell you what I renounce on my part, when I take justice into my own hands, and spare you all the rigours and murders of the law. I renounce for ever the dear hope of clearing my father’s name—I renounce also my love, and the man who has given me his true heart—I go forth into the world solitary, hiding your guilt in my own breast—I do this, because, unproved, I would scorn to speak of it. I leave you your fame and your name—two blessings never mine; I take from you your love and your home—two blessings I shall never, never have. I have finished. Now tell Michael Polgrain, when you see him, that I have listened to his words, and in my justice I remembered mercy.”

“Till eight o’clock to-morrow morning, did you say?” said Lord Crehylls, lifting his head from his clasped hands.

Madeline bowed silently in assent, and left him as quietly as a shadow.

CHAPTER XIX.



WHEN Madeline returned to her room she sat down on the floor desolate. The thought of her future life lay like a mountain on her heart; hope was cut off on every side, and she seemed like one standing on a desert waste, utterly alone. She began to repent of her mercy.

“Have I not suffered enough at the hands of these people?” she said to herself. “Why should I wreck my whole life now to spare them? I will denounce Mr. Lanyon, I will denounce Lord Crehylls—I will drag the whole gaping world around them to hear what I have to say.”

But here her eyes closed, and she shuddered from head to foot. The punishment was so dire that she could not look upon it even in thought. And whatever Mr. Lanyon’s guilt might be towards her, she felt she could not be his accuser, she felt she could not load him with infamy in his old age, and bring his gray hairs to the grave with shame.

“For his daughter’s sake he has shown me no mercy,” she said to herself, bitterly, “but for his own sake I will spare him. As for Lord Crehylls, on him I will have no pity, save the pity of silence, and if I could strike him without piercing Mr. Lanyon’s heart, I would not hold back the blow a moment. Every instant of hesitation, and of forbearance, is a wrong to my father and mother.”

She started up, as this thought stung her, and began to pace the room; then her eyes fell on her lover’s letter, lying on the table where she had placed it, before unlocking the desk. She caught it up and kissed it passionately, and unfolding it, read it slowly, letting quiet tears drop unchecked upon the paper. It was a large sheet, folded in the old-fashioned way, when the postage between Cornwall and London was a shilling, and stamps and envelopes were things unthought of,—and as it trembled in her hand, she saw upon the edges, doubled inwards, a sentence which had escaped her eye. It read thus:—

“I think you will truly be my first client, Madeline, for I have seized a clue to that strange Carbis mystery. I hold it in my hand now, and following it, as I mean to do, I shall soon track down that man—the hawker, who has so curiously disappeared from all his haunts since the terrible

day of Carbis's death. I promised Mr. Lanyon I would not name this matter to you unless I had good cause to believe I should find the man. Judge how good the cause is by my telling it."

Madeline laid down the letter, and passed her hand across her eyes, bewildered by these strange words. Then she thought she understood it all—it was another deception of Mr. Lanyon's, another lie he had told to screen and save his daughter's husband. Evidently he was careless how many victims he made, so he kept intact Agatha's happiness, and Geoffrey Crehylls' name and fame.

Seizing pen and ink eagerly, Madeline wrote, with a hurried hand, "You are deceived entirely. Take care what you do. I beseech you, let no other innocent man suffer; one is surely enough. Do not search for the hawker; he is as innocent and ignorant of this crime as you and I. The criminal is here, in this county, close at my hand, if I choose to seize him. I have spoken with him, and he confesses his guilt. After this avowal, you will drop the clue of which you speak. The whole idea is false, and it was falsely and purposely put into your mind." She added a few lines more, to say she was coming to London by the next day's mail; then she

stole down softly to the hall, and placed her letter in the post-bag.

"I will not lose a day in preventing an injustice," she said. As she crossed the hall again she met Grylls.

"Dinner is served, miss," said he.

His tone was quiet but uneasy. It is strange how soon the shadow of trouble spreads in a household.

Dinner! Madeline had never thought of it. Was it five o'clock already? When a great wave of trouble overwhelms us, time seems swallowed up. There is no future, no past, it is all present; and the world stands still while the woe goes over us. The trivial round of the hours upon the clock, the quiet routine of life, once so smooth and comfortable, strike us now as a wonder, or a pain; or sometimes, as in this instance, it comes in shape so incongruous, so inopportune, that the chafed spirit is moved to laughter.

Madeline looked within the stately room and glanced at the flower-decked table, and laughed to think she should be asked to sit down to eat and drink with Lord and Lady Crehylls.

"I am going away," she said to the amazed domestic. "I have not time to dine. Have you told your master and mistress their dinner is served?"

"My lady is too ill to leave her room," said Grylls, "and we have searched all through the

house and grounds for my lord in vain. Oh, Miss Madeline, what is the matter?"

But he spoke to the walls, for Madeline did not turn her head as she went up the great staircase, with slow, soft footfall. Something told her she would not see Lord Crehylls again. He had been a coward all his life, he was a coward still, and as he had fled once from the place of his crime, so would he flee now from the sight and fear of the victims his guilt had made. Above all, he would flee from suffering—the ease-loving, careless man; and she felt sure he had mistrusted her promise, and had already escaped her hand. But what a punishment was his, what a home he quitted, what hearts he crushed, what bitterness he took with him into exile! Sighing, she gazed around her, on the statues, the paintings, the marble pillars, the wealth of flowers, and all the signs of luxury lavished on every side; and she wondered whether Walter Sherborne, in his prison, forsaken of all, and condemned to die, was not a happier man than Geoffrey Crehylls would be in safety in a foreign land, self-banished.

Once more in her own room, Madeline finished her packing, and dressed herself, and counted the stock of money she had, and then sat down patiently to wait for the chaise, for which she had sent on quitting Lord Crehylls. While waiting thus, it struck her she ought to write

to Mr. Lanyon, and tell him something of all this, otherwise he would expect to find her at Penkivel, and he would wonder she was gone without a leave-taking; so she wrote thus:—

“Your daughter has commanded me to leave her house, and I obey; but I do not go in ignorance. I took my father’s desk from your room; in it there is a secret drawer, unknown to you, and in this I found a history which has killed in my soul all love, all affection, all gratitude. You have cheated me of these as you have cheated me in all else. Yet I cannot in one moment forget the lessons of twelve years, and in pity to your age and your remorse I leave you my forgiveness, and I promise you my silence. The secret you have kept from your daughter you can keep still; but her husband is an exile for life. This is the sole justice I do. How much I leave undone you alone can tell, and in your grief and your repentance—for surely you do repent—think of the greater suffering and the shame I spare you, and not of the lesser pain I inflict. Disgrace to gray hairs is terrible, and it seems unnatural, in spite of all my wrongs, that I, a young girl, should strike you such a blow. It is dreadful that you have given me the right to say such words as these to you; more dreadful still that, old as you are, and young as I am, you have given me the right to

despise you. Injustice, of all sins, is the one I most abhor; and what a mountain of injustice you have heaped upon me and mine! I suffer it still; I shall suffer it always, because I give you the great pity of my silence. Farewell."

She was not pleased with this letter; but there was no time to choose sharper, clearer words. She wrote it without tears, although her cheeks grew fevered and her fingers trembled. As she folded it, she bethought herself of some means by which it should surely reach Mr. Lanyon's hands without being seen by his daughter, and she resolved to drive round by Grace Chagwynne's and give it to her, with a strict charge to carry it to him herself.

A moment more, and the summons came for which she waited.

"The chaise you ordered is here, miss," said a servant; "but my lady desired me to say, you are quite welcome to take any of the Crehylls' carriages to drive to Penkivel."

"Is she so gracious?" thought Madeline, and her lip curled. "Thank you," she said, quietly, "I prefer the chaise."

Then she went down the long corridor, passing Mr. Lanyon's door with one wistful glance, and looking back but once after she had hurried by.

"Wont you go into Mr. Lanyon's room and

say good-bye, miss?" asked the maid, in some surprise.

"I have said it," replied Madeline.

Her voice was forced and strange, her heart was bounding against her side in hurried beats that took her breath away, and there was a dimness over all her sight—a dimness more dreary and depressing than tears can bring. In this darkness she went down the great staircase, her hand touching the balustrade softly as she went; in this darkness she passed through the hall, seeing the servants as in a mist, and bending her head to them in farewell. She thought she spoke to them; but though her lips moved, no word came; and finally, in this darkness she took her last look of Castle Crehylls, gazing at it earnestly from tower to basement; then a great shadow like night fell between her and the stately granite pile, and she found herself in the carriage on her knees weeping.

* * * * *

"Who is that come?" cried Lady Crehylls, starting up at the rumble of the wheels.

"It is Miss Sylvester, gone, my lady," answered her maid, who was sitting at the open window. "I heard her tell the post-boy to take her to Grace Chagwynne's—that's quite two miles out of the road; and I am sure she wont reach

Penkivel till midnight as it is. I can't see what she wants to go to Grace's for, my lady."

"What does it matter where she goes, so that she goes away for ever?" said the lady. "Oh, where is Lord Crehylls?" she cried. "Will he never, never come home? I am weary of this suspense."

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